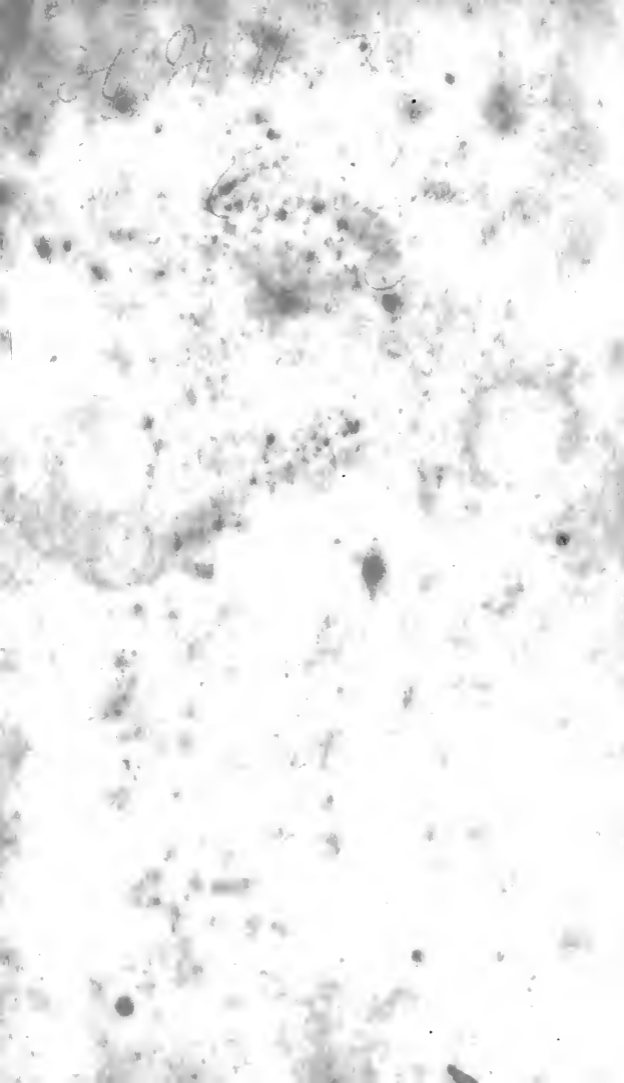




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HISTORICAL SKETCHES

AND

I N C I D E N T S ,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

ESTABLISHMENT AND PROGRESS OF

U N I V E R S A L I S M

IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

~~~~~  
BY S. R. SMITH.  
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## P R E F A C E .

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The work herewith presented to the public, originated in the request of one of our many Editors of religious papers, for a series of articles in some way connected with the progress of Universalism. The suggestion gave rise to the preparation of several incidents arranged in the order of time in which they occurred—and these again induced the addition of the historic sketches embodied in the following pages.

The consideration that the time was rapidly approaching when many of the facts here recorded, would be forgotten—that the time of our denominational infancy, and weakness, and reproach, was passing away forever—and that the very names of several devoted ministers would soon cease to be known save by their personal friends—seemed to demand some similar undertaking. But by whom should it be performed? Death had long since removed some, others had settled in other and distant

states—and none except the writer remained, who would probably ever perform the work. It is therefore offered to the public, and especially to the denomination, instead of a better from more competent hands.

No pretensions are made to a full and adequate history of Universalism in the state of New York. The biographical notices, so far from being intended to be circumstantial—are merely designed to give an idea of the times and position of the men. And whether living or dead, the author has spoken of them as the public esteemed them—or as he knew them.

The author makes no apology for obtruding himself so often upon the reader's notice. He only regrets, that he had not the ability to keep himself wholly out of sight, in the relation of facts in which he has been a constant actor for more than *thirty years*.

It will be perceived that the present little volume includes but a small portion of our progress as a denomination. Should the time and health of the writer permit, and other circumstances seem to require, the same general plan will be followed in farther attempts to supply what is here omitted.

That the past progress of what is believed to be the cause of truth, may be the pledge of its future triumph, is the earnest prayer and confident hope of

S. R. SMITH.

*Buffalo, August, 1843.*

## HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

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That the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind, was occasionally preached in the city of New York, from, and after the year 1770, appears from the biography of Rev. John Murray; who, though not the first public advocate of the restitution on the continent, may yet be considered the father of universalism in America. But the engrossing and exciting affairs of the Revolution, and the deep subsequent interest felt by all classes in the establishment of the new government, prevented for a time, the advancement of this great doctrine in the public mind. The "bread of life" had indeed been cast upon the waters when they were greatly troubled; but it was not lost. And after a quarter of a century had passed away, successful endeavors were made for

the establishment of Universalism in that city. A small congregation was finally gathered, which under the ministry of the late Mr. Edward Mitchel, occupied for several years, a building in Pearl-street—but eventually located and built the large brick church, corner of Duane-street and City Hall Place.

To this congregation, Mr. Mitchel continued to minister in a very acceptable manner, during his life. He was generally esteemed for the goodness of his heart, and the manliness and frankness with which he avowed his sentiments. By his friends, he was considered eloquent—and he was beyond doubt, capable of expressing his views with great fluency and effect. With strong feelings and ardent attachments, he was emphatically a bigot to his own opinions; and this distinctive feature of his character, rendered him in the pulpit, occasionally dogmatical and censorious. Like Mr. Murray, he was a Sabellian—and quite orthodox in the usual sense of that term, in nearly every thing else, except the doctrine of the restitution. But while his charities extended in

ample expressions of kindness and courtesy to all classes of trinitarian christians, he made little pretension to any for Unitarian Universalists. These he repelled, and reprobated in no measured terms; and won both his hearers and the converts to his faith, principally from the ranks of those who like himself, had little sympathy for the denomination.

It will be inferred, that Mr. Mitchel never identified himself with Universalists as a fellow-laborer. On the contrary, he disclaimed all connexion with—all fellowship for them, in the most explicit terms. For many years, he, and his respectable congregation stood apart from all fraternity with the religious world around them; sustaining themselves reputably, and gradually increasing in number, influence and resources. They have the merit of making the first favorable impression upon the public mind respecting the great doctrine of the restitution; and of laying the foundation of truth deep and enduring, in many hearts, in the city of New York. Since the death of Mr. Mitchel in 1827, his congregation after several unsuc-

cessful efforts to preserve its identity, has broken up; and many of its members have united with the more recent Universalist churches in that city, entertaining the views and holding the fellowship of the denomination.

#### CENTRAL NEW YORK.

It was not until 1802, that Universalism was preached in the state of New York, beyond the immediate vicinity of the city—unless perhaps, in some of the towns bordering on Vermont. In the summer of this year, Mr. Edwin Ferris—a plain man of Quaker habits, but of very good common sense, visited what is now the town of Butternuts, Otsego County, and delivered to the few and scattered inhabitants, the message of Universal salvation. In the following year, he removed his family from New England and settled in that town—continuing his ministry there, and in the neighboring settlements. It is probable that Mr. Ferris never wholly devoted his attention and his labors to the work of the ministry. He appears in the first instance, to have entertain-

ed some prejudices against receiving what is called 'ministerial support;' and it is certain that the general circumstances of the recent population were favorable to the gratification of his choice in this particular. Much of his time was therefore spent in the improvement and cultivation of a farm; though he seldom suffered his secular avocations to prevent an attendance on his ministerial duties. And in addition to his services on Sunday, he was often called to tender the consolations of the gospel to mourners, on funeral occasions. At this time, and during many succeeding years, whatever may have been the peculiarities or prejudices of Mr. Ferris, he faithfully devoted his talents to the interests and advancement of Universalism—cheerfully enduring the ignominy and reproach of its profession, and rejoicing in its triumphs. He entertained high and just views of the necessity of an elevated morality in the professors of religion—and especially in the professors of Universalism.—And he was among those who saw and felt the necessity and propriety of a sound system of discipline—and was vigilant to fasti-

diousness, of what he deemed the rights of the laity, and of individual congregations. His policy appears to have been, to restrict the power of ecclesiastical bodies. to subject ministers to well defined rules of discipline, and to leave societies to the management of their own concerns.

In the summer of 1804, Mr. Miles T. Wooley, located in the town of Hartwick, Otsego Co.—in the neighborhood of Mr. Ferris, where he also commenced preaching the restitution. This seems to have been a favorable location; and had the capabilities and worth of the preacher been equal to his advantages of place, the best results would have been realized. A successful attempt was made to form a society in this town, sometime in March 1803; and it is believed, that a constitution was adopted and subscribed by about *twenty-five members*. This was undoubtedly the first Universalist society, organized in the state of New York. But the eccentricities and immoralities of Mr. Wooley prevented his usefulness, and must have had an injurious effect upon the society. He was suspended from the fellowship of the



order, on the first organization of a proper council; and formally expelled in June of the following year.

In 1805, Mr. Nathaniel Stacy—a good man, and a most faithful, persevering and devoted minister, visited and preached in parts of Oneida, Madison, Otsego and Chenango Counties; and in the course of the season, societies were formed in Whitestown, (now New Hartford,) Hamilton and Brookfield. From this time, the affairs of the infant denomination assumed an aspect of order; and early measures were taken for the establishment of a system of discipline and church government. In July of this year, appeared the germ of the Western, (now Central,) Association of Universalists in the state of New York, in a public conference held at Burlington, Otsego County. This conference was attended by the three preachers already named, and by two or more lay delegates from each of the respective societies. The conference resolved, that it was expedient to form an Association, and that application be made to the “General Convention of Universalists” in New England at its ap-

proaching session, for aid and counsel, to enable them to carry said resolution into effect. In September following, a committee of that body, was appointed, to attend and assist in the organization of the contemplated association. This Committee attended accordingly, and the "WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSALISTS" was duly organized on Wednesday the 5th day of June, 1806, in the town of Columbus, Chenango County, New York. The societies in Hartwick, Whitestown, Hamilton and Brookfield, by their delegates and preachers, constituted the Association; and a society in Stamford, Delaware County, was received into fellowship during the session.

During the early times of the Association, it was the friendly practice—and a good one it was, for the General Convention to send a Committee of its body, to visit its respective sessions. Singular or incredible as this may now seem—such committees were most punctual in their attendance, even when forced to travel in no very commodious manner, and at their own expense, some two or three hundred miles. And yet this was

done as a matter of course, from year to year; and often by the same individuals.—Such labors and sacrifices are neither understood nor appreciated by the masses of society. Indeed, when performed as in this instance, by the advocates of an unpopular system of religion—it frequently happens that so far from being considered meritorious, they are regarded and treated as only worthy of execration. And the very things, which if done for the advancement of some popular scheme, would have excited the surprise and admiration of all classes, are generally esteemed as the empty and idle manœuvres of desperate men, for the purpose of spreading imposture and falsehood. Such has been the fate of nearly all the reformers who have labored and suffered in the cause of humanity—and such, it will probably continue to be, until men shall cease to be governed by their interests and prejudices, rather than by candor and common sense. But He, who has made *time* the instrument of correcting many errors, and who by its operation has vindicated successive reformers—will vindicate the men who like them oppo-

sed prevailing corruption and preached a purer gospel.

The session of the "Western Association," was held in 1807, in the village of N. Hartford, Oneida Co., and appears to have been one, from which the friends drew much encouragement. As on the preceding year, several of the most influential members of the General Convention, attended; and the business of the council, and also the public services, were so conducted, as to make a very favorable impression on the public mind.

During this session, a Constitution and Profession of Faith, were reported and adopted. This Constitution prescribed the limits of the Association—ample enough, as they included the entire portion of the state of New York lying west of the Hudson River. This vast tract of country, did not however at the time, reckon among its population 500 professed Universalists. The profession of faith was the same as had been previously adopted by the General Convention, and comprises the belief—"In one God, whose nature is love, one Lord Jesus Christ, who gave

himself a ransom for all men—and one Holy Spirit of grace, which will finally sanctify and save all mankind. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, contain a revelation of the character and will of God; and of the duty, interest and destiny of the human race. And that believers ought to maintain order and practice good works because these things are good and profitable to men.” This profession of faith had already been adopted by the few organized churches of the order; and has very generally been made the basis of the church compacts and formulas of faith existing in the denomination.

The original organization of the society in Whitestown, appears to have been under a Confession of Faith and Covenant, which constituted its members *a christian church*. The constitution, or by-laws which it appended, provided accordingly for the regular administration of the *ordinances*—and the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, was usually administered *once in three months*, when the society had a pastor. *Baptism* by affusion or immersion, was sometimes chosen by can-

didates, either because they had not previously received it, or because some particular mode was preferred. And whenever desired, it was administered in the form pointed out by the candidate. A similar, if not the same compact was adopted by the society in Hamilton; and probably by all—at least nearly all the earlier organized societies in the state. So that nothing could be more slanderous than the oft repeated assertion of the enemies of the restitution, that “Universalists had neither churches nor ordinances.” They had both, from their first establishment in central New York; and continue to have them, in almost every place where the circumstances of the congregation will warrant similar organizations.

There is one distinctive and benevolent feature in the constitution of Universalist societies—which if not peculiar to the denomination, is probably not generally known—certainly not by other sects. It is a provision *for the poor*. And so faithfully is this pledge redeemed, that very few instances can be found in which destitute Universalists have been thrown upon the public charities.

This regulation may not be adopted in every congregation—but as it was an important particular in all the older societies, whose *compacts* gave tone and form to others, it is probably the general rule with the denomination in New York. And it is certainly desirable that it should become universal, even though circumstances have neither rendered it necessary in every instance, nor human foresight provided for the contingency. The instances in which the blessings of this single provision, have been tested, are happily few. But these have shown that small donations when accompanied with advice and encouragement, was sufficient to preserve even the sick and indigent from despondency and degradation.

And it may not be improper, to view such social provision in the light of example—and to estimate the sum of comfort which may be diffused over the christian world by its general adoption. It is vain to say that mankind will refuse to learn from those they dislike. They never dislike a known good; and if Universalists practically carry out a benevolent regulation—others will at least profit by their example.

It does not appear that any additional societies were received into fellowship at this session—and it is fair to presume that none had been formed in the state during the preceding year. But it should not therefore be inferred that Universalism had made no progress. It had been preached in many places to good congregations, during that time; and had found a favorable reception in many minds which yet waited to learn “the way of the Lord more perfectly.” It was not in the nature of things, that the labors of the indefatigable STACY, should prove fruitless. He had now been located in this part of the state, for some two years—several societies had organized during his first temporary visit; and he had since searched out and preached in every accessible neighborhood. His unpretending manners, his devout sincerity, his untiring but temperate zeal, his uncompromising fidelity and christian charity, not only made him a favorite among the liberal minded by whom he was greatly esteemed—but won for him the respect of candid opposers, and sometimes divested even bigotry itself of half its exclusiveness. A



number of respectable congregations had been gathered by his labors; and the same, and probably equal influences had been exerted, as would have been, under a more formal organization. The principal, if not the only difference in result, was, that the Association was not aware of its actual strength.

1808. The Association met this year in Hartwick, Otsego Co.—and without receiving any accession of societies, appears to have derived encouragement from other considerations. Among these, should most probably be reckoned, the settlement of an additional minister in the town where the session was held. For hope was then young, and numbers were counted strength. Mr. James Babbitt had already—or soon after the meeting of the association, located in Hartwick; but subsequently, after some two or three years of profitless labors, he removed from that region of the state.

It had been the custom of the members of the General Convention who in the character of a committee, annually attended the meetings of the Association, to remain and

preach in the vicinity; and thus to aid the few laborers already in the country. These services were of great importance—as they were performed by men in most instances, who stood high in the denomination; and being strangers, their reputation secured large audiences, among which were many opposers who would not condescend to be hearers on ordinary occasions. That by these means, many prejudices were removed, as well as many converts made, to the doctrine of the restitution, is unquestionable. And although societies did not immediately spring up, and a visible augmentation of numbers and influence follow; it is certain that the elements of eternal truth were imbibed by many minds; and its influence felt in the hearts of thousands. In the process of a few years, these germs developed themselves in the formation of permanent societies, the establishment of churches, and the support of a regular ministry.

It was during one of these annual visitations, that the writer of these pages, heard for the first time, the message of universal grace. By what means the intelligence

that Mr. Hosea Ballou would preach on the following Sunday, in a place some fifteen miles distant, could have been conveyed to a very young man, who did not then know a single Universalist in the world, is not remembered. He went however, and heard a discourse in the morning, from Zech. 6: 13—and for the first time in his life, felt that he had listened to a sermon that neither involved an absurdity nor a contradiction. The congregation was not large, and occupied a school house in the present city of Utica—then a meagre and muddy village. A larger congregation was anticipated in the afternoon, and arrangements were made for the service in the open air, under some trees, on the bank of the Mohawk River. There in due time, a large auditory assembled; and listened to one of Mr. Ballou's best discourses from Deut. 33: part of 16th with the 17th ver. It was a glorious day, early in June—the silence of Sunday was around us—the bright blue heavens above us, partly veiled by the branches of a few scattering oaks—the clear, quiet river at our side—the ruddy and healthy preacher in all the vigor

of manhood before us, and pleading the cause of God and humanity with a group of most attentive hearers. Such a scene is not to be forgotten; and altogether, it was one in every respect calculated to make the most favorable, as well as lasting impressions.— And such certainly were its effects on the mind of the writer. For while it left him without any pretension to the knowledge or belief of Universalism, as a system of religious truth—it entirely satisfied him that it was consistent with itself, and with all that we see and know of the Deity and his moral government. It is scarcely to be doubted, that similar impressions were made on many persons in that congregation.

1809. . The session of the Western Association was held this year in Norwich, Chenongo County; and as usual, was attended by a delegation from the General Convention. Two societies were received into fellowship, viz. one in Ballston, Saratoga Co., and one in Jericho, (now Bainbridge,) Chenango Co. The former of these, has long since lost its identity, and merged in neighboring societies. The latter has attained

that place and exerts that influence, which is the just reward of becoming zeal and fidelity; and has usually enjoyed a moderate degree of prosperity.

Application was also made at this session by Mr. William Baker, for a letter of fellowship as a minister of the reconciliation. He was then a preacher in the Methodist connection—probably, what is termed a “local preacher.” The committee, to whom his request was submitted, reported “that his request be granted when he shall obtain a letter of dismissal from the Methodist denomination.” And the Moderator was instructed to grant the fellowship of the Association, whenever said letter of dismissal was obtained, in the course of the current year.—The letter was obtained, and the fellowship granted accordingly at the session the following year. This was the first accession, otherwise than by removal, to the ministry, in the State. Mr. Baker appears to have been a well disposed, illiterate and inefficient man—and was probably better qualified for some other field of labor and duty, than the ministry. It is not known, that as a man,

he ever did any particular evil—and certainly as a preacher, he never effected any essential good to the denomination. And after a few years, he discontinued his ministry; and devoted himself to some secular employment.

In the summer of this year, Mr. Calvin Winslow—a Methodist circuit preacher, renounced his former views, professed his faith in “the restitution of all things,” and received the fellowship of the association. He was possessed of strong native talents, of quick apprehension and warm affections,—was a very ready speaker, and preserved much of the style and energy so characteristic of the preachers of his former connection. His memory was remarkably tenacious, and while he read little, he observed much, which he had the art of turning to very good account in his public ministrations. Mr. Winslow received ordination the following year. And but for one besetting weakness, by which he was finally overcome,—intemperance—would have been a valuable acquisition. No man loved the truth better,—his heart was in its prosperity through every trial, and every period of his life.

1810. This year was productive of some important changes in the circumstances of the few societies, then existing in central New York. None of them had been able to procure preaching more than one, or at most, two Sundays in the month—not because there was not a disposition to support meetings—but because there were not preachers to furnish the supply. In the mean time, many places in which respectable congregations could be gathered, were wholly destitute of any regular meetings; and depended on the occasional visits of clergymen for week-evening lectures at long intervals.—Congregations which under other circumstances, would have required a larger portion of ministerial labors; with a view to greater general good, satisfied themselves with a single meeting in the month, in order that some other society or congregation, might obtain a like supply. There was an all-pervading sympathy, that seemed to find pleasure in the good of others; and it was long cherished, by the common desire of diffusing as far as practicable, the knowledge of the truth. The condition of an infant denomina-

tion, like that of a new settlement, tends to expel the selfishness so common to older communities.

These considerations will account for the great interest which was taken in the acquisition of an additional preacher. No worldly encouragements could be offered as inducements to enter the ministry—and up to this time, not one individual had engaged in the work, who had not been previously connected with some other denomination in the character of a clergyman. And from causes, concerning which it is vain to speculate, many of the early ministerial converts did not ultimately prove of any material benefit or honor to the cause of Universalism. They were received with joy, encouraged as far as practicable—but from previous habits of thought, or inattention to the principles which constituted the *system* of their adoption, they did not always succeed.—Hence, when a tried and approved preacher located in the country, a new and powerful impulse was given to the cause by the more regular and constant supply of destitute places—and especially by the confidence which



he inspired in the minds of the friends of truth.

The Association met this year, in Madison, Madison Co. at, or about which time, arrangements were made with Mr. Paul Dean, to settle with the society in Whites-town, half of his time being relinquished for the general benefit of the cause. With enough of experience to give him a reputation as a minister of the order—with high popularity as an eloquent speaker—with very superior colloquial talents—and with an industry worthy so good a cause, Mr. Dean was welcomed to the new field of his labors with mingled feelings of pride and pleasure. And during a residence of three years in the country, he seldom disappointed the high expectation of his friends. He was young, healthy and persevering—filling his almost daily appointments with the utmost punctuality; and shrinking from no labor which they involved. And without any reflection on the talents or usefulness of others, in their respective spheres, no man living was perhaps more perfectly adapted to the work allotted him. His constitution and habits—his love

of social and religious excitement—his abundant command of language, and the ease and freedom of his delivery—all combined to fit him exquisitely for the wants of the denomination. He must travel much, visit much; and of course study little. He must preach often—preach doctrinal sermons; and the doctrine of the restitution was his favorite theme. He must mingle with every possible condition of society; and he was formed to interest and gratify all. He must do battle before the public, with the champions of opposing sects; and his ready command of words enabled him to talk and conciliate, if he failed to convince.

One society was received into fellowship, at this session; giving evidence of a gradual augmentation of organized strength. The same influences which had previously been at work, were still in operation—strengthened by the accumulation of numbers, and aided by a better understanding of the principles of truth. And congregations had been gathered in several places, and friends had come forward, 'till then unknown. The denomination looked for little—and was satisfied with

small visible gains. These, it detected with a keenness, and appreciated with a feeling which no subsequent additions could ever inspire. A new congregation, an additional family, and even the accession of an individual to the cause, were matters of consequence, and hailed as cause of congratulation and encouragement.

1811. It is probably the fortune or *misfortune* of all newly organized christian communities, to win to their ranks the most discordant materials, and the most eccentric characters. The nucleus being once formed and put in motion, seems to attract nearly every particle floating in moral space, however unlike itself—if in some one particular, there exists a common element. Hence it follows, that in process of time a separation takes place—the discrepancies becoming more obvious, and the impossibility of acting in concert being felt by all parties.

One or two events illustrative of this principle, occurred at the session of the Western Association in Jericho (now Bainbridge) in June of this year. Fellowship was granted to Mr. Lewis Beers, as a minister of the rec-

conciliation. He was a gentleman of undoubted worth, of respectable talents, and a firm believer in the restitution. But he held nothing else in common with Universalists. He was a Swedenborgian—and consequently, in the estimation of every proper Universalist, a visionary. Nothing can be farther from the plain, common sense doctrine of the restitution, than the forced, and unnatural, and mystical “science of correspondencies,” maintained by Swedenborg and his admirers. In an age making any pretention to reason, Universalism coupled with the endless fancies of such a theory, could not be supposed to make any very intelligible progress. Nor is it even probable, that had there been a congregation of his own faith accessible, Dr. Beers would have sought acquaintance and fellowship with Universalists. As it was, this was his *first*, and probably his *last* appearance at the Association; but he retained his clerical credentials, and ever remained the estimable and warm friend of the denomination. His ministry appears to have been incidental rather than regular—and though known to be a Universalist, he was still regarded as laboring for the “New Jerusalem Church.”

At the same session of the Association, the Council was honored with the attendance of, and the congregation edified by, a discourse from—*a female preacher*. She too, was a Universalist. Miss Maria Cook, was at the time some thirty-five years of age, of genteel and commanding appearance, well educated, and certainly a very good speaker.—From the character of her discourses, it would appear that Universalism as a system, was unknown to her; and it was rather the result of her feelings than of an extensive acquaintance with the scriptures, that she had made it the creed of her adoption. Difficult as many found it, to reconcile the ministry of Miss Cook, with their ideas of duty and propriety—they still accorded her their sympathy and their hospitality. She was a Universalist and a preacher of that doctrine—none doubted the purity of her motives, or the sincerity of her heart; and satisfied that she would do no hurt, they yielded her the right of choosing this manner of doing good. And for a time—while the double charm of novelty and singularity furnished its attractions, multitudes crowded to hear her ministrations.

But these influences could not, and they did not last long; and she was permitted and encouraged to discontinue her public labors, and to seek a more congenial sphere under the protection of a hospitable private family.—Miss Cook's connections were numerous and respectable; and were by her, represented, as inveterately opposed to Universalism. This was probably true—but there is much reason to believe that their opposition to her, grew out of far other considerations. They were extremely averse to her assumption of the ministerial character; and probably not without grounds of apprehension that so extraordinary an undertaking was an evidence of *mental alienation*. One thing is certain—they received and cherished her; whenever she preferred to avail herself of their protection and kindness.

No societies were added during the recess of the Association, the preceeding year. Still the friends of the cause, found abundant encouragement, in the more extended labors of the few ministers of truth, and the greater stability and moderate growth of societies and congregations. The scripture proofs, and the

moral influences of the doctrine of the final purity and happiness of all men were better understood; and many laymen had become its most efficient advocates in their respective vicinities. They carried the testimony of truth to the firesides of hundreds, whom pride or prejudice restrained from its open investigation; and by their integrity, if they did not win converts, they at least secured respect from their opposers. There was a necessity for such an understanding of the scriptures, as would enable the believer to give a "reason of his hope." For every form of objection was constantly made to the doctrine—and with every degree of temper. Happily, the feelings of Universalists kept pace with their wants; and they read and studied the Bible with great diligence and success. And whatever the world may think—there was probably no class of professors to whom the scriptures were more precious, or by whom they were better understood.

It was during this summer that the writer became fully identified with Universalists—sympathizing in all that concerned them as far as their circumstances were known; and

confirmed in the belief, that the final holiness and happiness of all mankind was the great doctrine of divine revelation, and therefore the truth of God. This was too great—too momentous a truth, to be believed and enjoyed in silence. With all the discouragements and difficulties—with all the privations and obloquy which lay before him—but one all-pervading impression was ever with him—it was, that he *must preach* this gospel of illimitable grace to mankind. With what propriety this feeling was cherished, he pretends not to judge—but during long years of experience and trial; it has never once forsaken him, and its indulgence has never in all that time, inflicted one pang of regret. On the contrary, every year has added new reasons of confidence in the truth of Universal Salvation; and new assurances of the success of its ministry, in the adoption of the truth by the human race.

#### FORETASTE.

We had a week-day lecture, once a month by Mr. Dean, in the town where I resided; and which, he was most faithful to attend,



both in sunshine and storm. But for once—the indisposition of his family detained him; and at the appointed hour, a student of his arrived, bearing the intelligence, and leaving us the alternative of a discourse from the young man, or of dispensing with any service on the occasion. It was decided by the old heads after a moment's consultation, to hear the student; although it was supposed it would probably be his first sermon.

In a few minutes the school house was respectably filled—and better filled than usual, from the fact that a young man was to preach. For the intelligence spread with surprising rapidity, and young and old, friends and enemies came in and seated themselves with all becoming gravity. But the stealthy looks which were exchanged from side to side, told of doubts about the issue, as well as of the fun that lay concealed under the staid and demure countenance.

The introductory services—the singing and prayer were got along with most reputably; but now in almost breathless suspense, and no small degree of anxiety among the friends; we waited for the sermon. To me, it was

a moment of positive agony. The young man had however very plainly “screwed up his mind to the sticking point”—sundry corners of the Bible were ominously turned down—and at last he arose, looking unutterable things. And so the event proved. Not but that he said many excellent things, and quite enough of them—but they were manifestly not exactly the things which he intended to say. He was as green as a cucumber—wore a suit of substantial homespun, that would stand a winter at “Melville Island”—it was a glorious sun-lit day about mid July—and the atmosphere like a calm on the coast of Africa, save its pestilence. To all these *melting* considerations, was added the keen and fixed gaze of every eye in the room.—But as if to try his strength—there he stood, perspiring at every pore—and then in a voice of singular intonation, he gave out the text—“For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am *I* also judged as a sinner?”—Rom. 3: 7.

I had never in my life studied a sermon; but it struck me at once that this was quite

too much for the speaker; and that it would require far more self-command than he possessed to make it intelligible to his hearers. Besides, the selection strangely enough, forced a line of Dr. Young upon my recollection—

“Who dive at stars and fasten in the mud.”

My seat enabled me to have a fair profile view of the speaker's face; and the workings of his mind could be very distinctly read in the changes of his countenance. He talked rapidly, and labored as if for life—'till apparently all resources failed save memory. And evidently determined not to yield to his embarrassments—he dropped into the Bible and poured out a series of quotations in one steady and seemingly inexhaustible stream to the end of the discourse.

Never did I hear the word *amen* with so much pleasure—never found greater relief in looking up with the consciousness that I could once more “breathe easy.” For my mind had but recently been finally made up to devote myself to the ministry of reconciliation; and I saw and felt the trial which at no distant day awaited me. I had fully sympathiz-

ed with the speaker—felt all his embarrassments—quailed like him under the steady gaze of all eyes—like him felt the blood mount to my head, and then seem to thicken, and accumulate, and curdle about the heart, until oppressed with a sense of suffocation.

But I had learned something; and in the most practical way imaginable without personal experiment. I had learned never to trust myself before a congregation in the capacity of a preacher, without having something to say besides quoting scripture—and certainly not to make my first appearance without *Notes*. The superior efficacy of what is called extemporaneous preaching, was duly appreciated; but this illustration convinced me, that a first effort was no time or place to test the ability of its successful attainment.

It will be gratifying to the reader to know, that this young man, became a good and useful preacher; and that he has sustained from the first, a high character for moral and intellectual worth.

## A DISCUSSION.

Mr. Dean continued the week-day lecture before named, and in early fall an event occurred which at the time, excited a very lively interest in the vicinity. There were several Methodist families, whose apprehensions were awakened, by the establishment of a Universalist meeting, at their very doors.— And being apprised of the times when the meetings were held, they secretly sent some fifteen or twenty miles for a popular preacher of their own denomination, to come and put down the intruding heretic. The congregation assembled as usual, (at about 4 o'clock, P. M.,) and then, first learned the object in contemplation. Mr. Dean also arrived—entirely unaware of the intended assault, and consequently as little prepared for it, as a clergyman could be. The Methodist minister—Mr. Wm. B. Lacy, was on the ground, charged to the teeth, with the chosen arguments for the contest.

At the close of the lecture, the preliminaries of debate were settled—a few minutes spent in taking breath—and at about six o'clock the discussion formally commenced.

The following propositions or rather questions, were then proposed by Mr Lacy:

“1. Do the scriptures teach that some men will die in their sins?”

“2. Will those who die in their sins, be punished?”

“3. If so—Will that punishment be endless?”

Two of these were conceded. Mr. Dean admitted that not only some men, but that all men would die sinners, and that all sinners would be punished. And he dispensed with all argument and proof of the propriety of this admission, in order to reach as early as possible, the third, and most important proposition. And here an incident occurred—only worthy of note from its singular effrontery. It was well known, that Mr. Dean made no pretensions to a knowledge of the original languages in which the scriptures were written. His antagonist had already made some little parade of books—and now displayed a Greck Testament, very gravely inquiring whether they should quote the original text. And this question was asked by a minister—who afterwards admitted in the

same public manner, in a debate with the same man—that he knew little or nothing about the language!

Mr. Dean took the negative of the third proposition, and sustained his position principally by the criticisms of Dr. Chauncey—and at the same time reviewing briefly, the arguments and proofs adduced by his opponent in support of the doctrine of endless misery. The discussion was continued about five hours; and evidently terminated much less to the satisfaction of Mr. Lacy and his Methodist friends, than they had anticipated. On the contrary, the friends of Mr. Dean, felt no disappointment, and suffered no mortification. They did not consider the subject by any means exhausted; but they were satisfied of his ability to maintain and defend his views.

It was apparent that Mr. Lacy had failed of convincing the public of the error of Universalism. He had taken time for preparation—had deliberately chosen his ground of debate, and the time and mode of attack—still he had failed. And the immediate and direct result was—not that converts were made to Universalism—but the conviction

of the auditory, that whether right or wrong—true or false, it was a doctrine which admitted of too much evidence and was sustained by too cogent arguments, to be crushed by his prowess. The manner in which the interview had been sought, together with his general management of the debate, sunk Mr. Lacy in the estimation of many; and proportionally elevated Mr. Dean in the scale of popularity. And setting aside the wider range of the subjects of later discussion, and the diffusion of the arguments used, through the medium of the press—as much immediate good was effected by this humble and almost forgotten work of a single evening, as has usually resulted from the most elaborate and long-drawn discussions which have since occurred in the denomination.

The few preachers of Universalism lived in a state of perpetual excitement—their peculiar situation daily bringing them in contact with their opposers, or subjecting them to the endless interrogatories of their friends. And though the public mind exhibited no particular indications of excitement on the



subject—an impression was made, by their faithful and well-directed labors. It is probably true, that in all places and all instances in which the simple and intelligible doctrine of Universal Salvation has been preached by a respectable man—a favorable impression has been made upon the public mind. In the present instance, there is no room to doubt the fact. The surface appeared calm and comparatively undisturbed—but there was a movement and an agitation deep below; stirring the long stagnant prejudices and opinions of society, and improving its views and its charities.

It was about this time (1811,) that an incident occurred, perfectly illustrative of the character and condition of many religious minds. One of the preachers of the Restitution, on attending an appointment for the first time in a place where there were several influential friends, and “many opposers,” was favored with a very general attendance of the latter, who seemed “astonished at the doctrine.” The attendance and interest manifested, encouraged the friends to request another appointment, which was accordingly

made. On the breaking up of the congregation, a member of the Presbyterian Church, who had been a profound listener to the discourse—came forward and begged the preacher at his next visit, to preach from John 5: 28, 29— to which of course he readily consented.

Notice of the subject of discourse was circulated industriously among the several sects of opposers, and all the staunch ones determined to be present. In the mean time, they ventured to conjecture the result. Some thought, that the preacher would be perfectly overwhelmed with the *text* itself, and would be at once silenced, or become so conscience-smitten as to abandon any farther pretensions to Universalism. Others concluded that as Universalist preachers were rather shrewd fellows, it was quite probable that in this instance, as in others of which they had heard—he would find some expedient by which to extricate himself—or what was quite as probable, the *Devil* might help him to explain the passage and save him from the dilemma!

The day came when the validity of these

conjectures was to be tested; and with it, came also the preacher. He entered upon the subject with all his wonted composure; and to the astonishment of some of his hearers, not only discoursed with his accustomed ease and fluency—but gave such an exposition of the text as most effectually to silence every valid objection. He was evidently neither embarrassed with the *supposed* difficulties which the passage involved—nor under demoniacal influence. But stood before them in the honest simplicity of truth, and urged home upon their hearts the testimony of the scriptures, with modest zeal and almost irresistible power.

“Ah,” said the man who gave him the text—“the preacher piled up the testimony in favor of his positions, as the farmer heaps up his newly cleaned wheat on his threshing floor, till it *ran over* on every hand; and not only reached every boundary, but filled the mind with glorious conceptions of blessing and abundance. And notwithstanding my Presbyterianism, I went to him and told him—that I was *more than satisfied* with his testimony—that it was true, every word of it—but that I did not believe it.”

Such was doubtless the condition of thousands, at that day; and it is not difficult to predict the result with honest minds.

#### ANOTHER DISCUSSION.

1812. In February this year, and after some little previous arrangement, another public discussion took place between Mr. Lacy and Mr. Dean. The propositions were the same as on the former occasion—and the parties met at the Presbyterian Church, New Hartford, where a large congregation assembled and evinced a very deep interest in the subject by profound attention. The debate was maintained for some time, with great decorum—Mr. Dean conceding as before, that some—that all men, would die in sins, and that all sinners would be punished. This brought them again directly to the question, whether that punishment would be endless. And here again, Mr. Lacy introduced the Greek Testament. Mr. Dean had been led to suspect that his *learned* opponent had ventured beyond his depth—put the question in such manner as to prevent any evasion—whether he really understood the Greek

Language? To the great surprise of many, and evidently much to his own mortification, Mr. Lacey admitted, that he knew little or nothing about it!

The discussion was then of course, conducted in plain English—appeals being made respectively to the criticisms of others, with occasional constructions of certain proof texts. At length, Mr. Dean having quoted some passage designed to show what the will of God was, in relation to man's final destiny—the following dialogue in substance, took place—

LACEY—"If you will prove from the Bible that it is the *unconditional will* of God that all men shall be saved, I will concede the argument."

DEAN—(After quoting several texts, very deliberately and distinctly,) "I have now given the required proof; and call on you to fulfil your promise and concede the argument."

LACEY—"I made no such promise."

GENTLEMAN—"I distinctly understood Mr. Lacey to say—that if his opponent would prove the unconditional will of God to save

all mankind, he would concede the argument. I have so put it down in my Notes; and presume that it was so understood by the congregation.

LACEY—"That's a Universalist—one of your friends; and I will not take his testimony."

DEAN—(Looking around upon the congregation) "Well,—if *you* have any friends here, I will take *their* testimony."

LACEY—(A gentleman having whispered to him for a few moments)—"If I made any such statement, I do not recollect it."

DEAN—(Taking his hat)—"I do not consider myself under any obligation to continue any longer, the discussion of so grave a subject, with a man whose memory is so very treacherous."

The congregation rose—many voices exclaiming—"it is enough," and all rushed out of the house.

To say nothing of the arguments in general, or of the force of the testimony adduced by Mr. Deán, in relation to the admission of his opponent; the *manner* in which Mr. Lacey disposed of the subject, was to

the last degree exceptionable, if not equivocal. And whatever might have been his motives or convictions, it was impossible to witness the proceedings, without feeling that he was either very weak, or very reckless. This was plainly the general feeling; of the existence of which, there is good reason to believe that both himself and his friends were fully aware. For in due season, he was removed from one of the best circuits in the State, in which he was the superior—to another which required almost as many labours under as many privations, as any other. He endured his degradation for a time, and went over to the Episcopalians—and was rewarded with the Rectorship of St. Peter's church in the city of Albany.

Little moral effect could be expected to result, from a public discussion so conducted and so terminated. Yet it had its uses. It tended to confirm the opinion that Universalism shunned no trial to which its opposers chose to subject it; and that its advocates sought no means of its vindication, save those of scripture and reason. This, like the former discussion, added much to the popularity

of Mr. Dean, and so far was favorable to the interests of Universalism.

#### AND YET ANOTHER DISCUSSION.

Mr. Dean had during the preceeding year, occasionally travelled some sixty miles West, for the purpose of visiting and preaching to a congregation in the village of Nine Mile Creek, in the town of Marcellus. On one of these preaching excursions, he lectured at Manlius, or Onondaga, where two clergymen—one a Methodist, and the other, a Presbyterian, were present. At the close of the Lecture, the Methodist entered into controversy—but after a short time, candidly acknowledged that he did not feel competent to continue the debate, and took his seat. On this, the Presbyterian—who was no other than the somewhat distinguished Dr. Lansing, rose, and said in amount—“that although his friend did not, there were perhaps those present, who *did* feel able to maintain such a discussion.” This challenge was promptly accepted—the preliminaries of debate were settled—the time fixed, and public notice sent far and wide by both parties.



At the time appointed, (the latter part of February, 1812,) the parties met at the Court House in Onondaga—as the most convenient and spacious building in the region. The point at issue, was the doctrine of the final Salvation of all mankind; and the debate was continued through the day, in presence of a large concourse of deeply interested auditors. And notwithstanding the fearful odds in public prejudice, learning and science, against Mr. Dean—he sustained himself and his positions with so much propriety and success, that he won respect from his opposers and the admiration of his friends. And years afterwards, individuals might be found, who repared to that discussion with the deepest dislike of Universalism—but who dated their conversion to its belief, from the influence wrought upon their minds on that occasion.

#### THE THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY—STUDY.

After a visit of a few days—I became in the month of April, 1812, a theological student. If the reader supposes that I had any definite or proper notions of a requisite course of theological reading, preparatory to the

ministry—even of Universalism, he is entirely mistaken. And he should greatly moderate his ideas, if he thinks that my preceptor knew, or understood much more about the matter than myself.

My room-mate was a young man of some 24 years of age, with a respectable English education; and greatly my superior in the knowledge of men and things. He possessed talents of a high order—was abundantly sensible of his pre-eminence—and among other accomplishments, was sickly, nervous, and intolerably irritable. After a few days of distance and reserve—mutual neglect and contempt, I became regularly and duly installed in his good graces; and while he always maintained, and I cheerfully conceded his superiority in every thing that he chose to claim, we lived together for months, in great cordiality. This was the more important, as our mutual superior was usually absent, full five days out of every week.

The Library—Heaven forgive this application of the word—consisted principally of Locke's Essays on the human understanding, Watts' and Duncan's Logic, Blair's Rhetoric,

Newton and Faber on the Prophecies, Ballou's Treatise on Atonement, Candid Review, and Notes on the Parables, Pettiperre on Divine Goodness, Winchester's Dialogues, Brown's Dictionary of the Bible—Cruden's Concordance—and what was of more value than all of them to a novice, Claude on the composition of a sermon. Let no man despise "the day of small things"—for such as this Library was, it was by far the best collection of Books in the possession of any Universalist minister in the State.

No attention was required, and none was given to the composition of sermons—save what was voluntarily sought from the translated Claude; and at the end of more than seven months, I left without having made a single attempt to frame a regular discourse. In that time, I had probably not enjoyed three weeks society, with the man whom I had chosen for my guide and teacher; and with none of my desires for the ministry abated, I almost despaired of attaining the humblest qualifications. To render this consideration still more pungent, it was probable that for months, I should be cut off from any direct

association with an intelligent Universalist.— Fortunately however, the vexations of “The School Master,” were soothed by the cordial sympathies of several worthy believers in the doctrine of impartial grace and universal salvation.

This year (1812) the session of the Western Association was held in Duanesburg, Schenectada Co., and appears to have enjoyed a season of spiritual refreshing. Several additional preachers were present, who had probably received the fellowship of the order from some kindred Associations in New England—as no mention is made of their ever having done so in New York.— And it is certain that they became permanent residents within the limits of the Western Association. One of these—Mr. L. Knapp, was a young man, with an excellent moral character, and very good qualifications, as they were considered, for the work of the ministry. His subsequent life has done honor to his profession; and he has labored hard, and endured much in the faithful vindication of the truth. Few can appreciate the position of a young man, who like him enters

a new and untried field of moral labor, where friends are to be raised up from a host of enemies. It is like raising "children to Abraham from the stones" of the street. And he who neither falters nor despairs in such an enterprise, must rely on, and find support from, a sustaining power other than man or earth can yield. Wherever Mr. Knapp has been known, he has been honored—and may his declining years be peaceful and happy, as his life has been virtuous and useful.

Mr. I. H. Ellis, another preacher whose name first appears at this Session of the Association, was a convert from the ministry of the Baptists. What his standing was among his former friends, is unknown—but it is scarcely possible that it should have been so high as to attract the envy of his brotherhood. He retained so much the spirit of his former views—and used such singular and unadvised forms of expression, as soon to lose caste among Universalists. However pure and upright his motives might have been, he was of no benefit to the denomination; and after a few years, its fellowship was withdrawn.

The following incident will illustrate the character of Dr. Ellis. Of course, we do not vouch for its substantial verity—but give it, as it was received, as one among a thousand instances of his utter recklessness of expression. The story goes, that he was preaching on the scripture use of the word *Hell*—and while explaining the original term *Gehenna*, as used in the New Testament, he observed—That *gehenna* meant the valley of Hinnom so often spoken of in the Old Testament, and which was so called from a family of that name by whom it was owned. He then added—“*I knew Old Squire Hinnom very well.*” Whether his hearers were as well satisfied that he had ever formed such an *acquaintance*, as with his exposition, we are not informed.

One society, that in Ellisburg, Jefferson Co. was received into the fellowship of the Association. No stated ministrations of the doctrine of the restitution, could have been enjoyed by this society. For it was far removed from the residence of any of the few preachers. The most that it could have received at their hands, was a temporary visit from that most indefatigable pioneer—

Mr. Stacy. Thus while the social interests of the denomination were very little advanced, in consequence of the great distance between kindred societies; centres were gradually forming, which in process of time were to meet and spread the influence of the truth far and wide. And a few years have usually been sufficient to show, that these distant societies exerted great power in building up the cause in their respective vicinities. In no instance perhaps, has that power been more effectually displayed, than by this society in Ellisburg.

In the course of this year another Society and preacher were added in support of Universalism. Mr. I. Sharman, formerly a Free Will Baptist—had become a Unitarian Universalist; and gathered a small society in the town of Manlius, Onondaga Co. over which he was ordained Pastor, by a Council of the Association. Mr. Sharman was from England, and originally a member of the same congregation with the far-famed Dr. Carey—missionary to India. He had read much, and remembered with extraordinary tenacity, what he read. But he was neither an

easy, nor interesting speaker. His mind appeared to be overloaded by its accumulations; and like a full store room which contained many articles of sterling value, by want of orderly packing, if found at all, it was with difficulty and amidst confusion. But he was a christian in the best sense of the term.—He loved the gospel of Universal grace; and he lived in honest simplicity, an honour to its profession. The peace of his kind spirit, rest upon his memory.

At this time, and indeed for two years preceding, Messrs. Stacy and Dean were the efficient ministers of the restitution in the State. They spared no labor, and neglected no proper occasion to push the doctrine of the gospel into every vicinity. For this purpose they travelled much, and lectured almost daily during the fall and winter of the year; and they performed these labors under circumstances of trial and privation, which at this day, seem scarcely credible. Much of the day was spent in travelling to meet their appointments—the evening in preaching—after which, and frequently until late at night, they were forced to answer the numerous



inquiries of friends, or to battle over the catalogue of objections with some captious opposer. And all this time, sensible that perhaps half the family whose hospitality they were receiving, would scarcely regard it as a crime to poison them. No worldly motives can sustain men, under such circumstances.

It was on these ministerial visitations, that every bigot or fanatic found an opportunity to display his zeal. They were the favorite seasons, in which these children of darkness and wrath, vented their utmost spleen, and exhibited in more tangible forms the depths of their depravity. They could perpetrate offences with the greater impunity, because generally their families were the only witnesses—and very commonly the only real sufferers. There, at their own firesides, they committed innumerable offences against civility and hospitality, in acts and omissions, which are amusing enough at this distance of time; although they were then matters of serious moment. It seems quite a pleasant joke, that a pious lady after fidgeting, and pouting, and grumbling 'till eleven o'clock at night, should then suddenly recollect—that

she had *entirely forgotten* to get the family supper! Nor would it then, have entered her mind. (she had been so occupied and *delighted* with the conversation,) had it not been hinted by a patient husband, or the more decisive remonstrances of a crying child! It extorts a smile now, that on some special pretence, the preacher must take *tea* with a family which overwhelmed him with the courtesey of the invitation, only to enjoy an opportunity of insulting him; and which after much show and parade, treated him—and themselves too—with a cup of *hot water*!

Sometimes, but rarely, incidents of a more serious nature occurred. One of this character was encountered by Mr. Dean, in the fall of 1812. He had attended an afternoon Lecture, a few miles from home; after which, he accepted an invitation to tea previous to returning. On the way to the house, the gentleman informed his guest—that his wife was much opposed to Universalism; and begged him to excuse any violence to civility of which she might be guilty. Thus admonished, he was prepared for the exhibition of much ill-nature and intolerance; and looked

for no higher forms of hostility. But the event proved, that he had reckoned without his host—or rather *hostess*.

The gentleman at whose house the parties had now arrived, was accompanied by two daughters, members of some partialist church. And the preacher soon observed, that from some unknown cause—one or the other of them, never for a moment left him. Matters had proceeded in this way for some time, when the mother entered and was formally introduced to the preacher. She barely looked at him—buised herself in placing a rat-tail skillet full of water, on the coals which she drew from a wood fire—and left the room without uttering a word. The daughters exchanged looks—waited a few minutes under much apparent hesitation and embarrassment—and then, one of them seized the skillet and ran out of the house. The mother, evidently on the watch, ran after her; and the chase was kept up with great spirit and at full speed around the entire building—when both again entered the sitting room, minus the skillet and greatly out of breath. As soon as rage and exhaust-

ion would permit, the mother sharply inquired—what had been done with her skillet? To which the daughter replied—that she had taken good care of it. The mother declared, that she must have it and could not do without it. The daughter rejoined—that if she *must* have it—she must *find* it! The mother again withdrew and the daughter resumed her seat; and informed her sister in a whisper, loud enough to be heard—that she had deposited the obnoxious skillet in a water-tank around the corner of the house.

It was now apparent from the insane violence of the mother, and the vigilance and embarrassment of the daughters, that matters were rapidly approaching a crisis. What was yet in reserve none seemed to know—but in defiance of assumed composure, all were evidently preparing for the worst—for renewed conflict. Nor were they long left in suspense. The final onset was made—the real *argumentum ad hominum*—and the field abandoned to the husband, the daughters and the minister.

The mother losing all hopes of recovering the skillet, entered an adjoining pantry—

seized an old pewter quart tankard full of yeast—and with steady aim, and the augmented might inspired by rage, levelled the whole mass at the preacher's devoted head. It was now apparent why one or the other of the daughters remained in the room—it was that they might protect their guest from personal injury. And when the heavy mug of foaming yeast was hurled at his head, one of them, quick as thought, suspended a large woolen shawl before him, which received and retained both the missile and most of its contents. A half-yard square of a fine blue overcoat, was not merely bespattered—but literally pasted with the yeast, which the preacher wore home in triumph.

But it will be asked—why so much interest in that skillet of water? The answer is both obvious and intelligible. It was placed at the fire for the sole purpose of being poured, *boiling hot*, upon the head of the Universalist minister! And its removal was therefore, the setting aside of a very *warm* argument—probably the most dangerous, and the most likely to *silence* a Universalist, of any that was ever employed in the State of New York.

Let no man despair however, for this was the expiring effort of this vindictive woman, whose rage and violence now recoiled upon her own head. From that time forward, it is believed that she never attempted any outrage against Universalists. The reaction which attends, or soon follows unusual excitement and violence did its work in this instance, most effectually and beneficially.— She ceased to oppose and learned to respect the opinions of Universalists. And in 1817, when on her death-bed—the writer of this, was called in to pray with her; and he heard from her own lips—the acknowledgmnnt of her folly and rashness—of the pain and mortification which these had brought down upon her—of her final reconciliation—of her ardent and long cherished wish, which had now been gratified, that she might see and unite in prayer with a Universalist preacher, to whom she could make these statements—and that she could now die in peace! Thus terminated, the career of one of the most vindictive enemies of the truth. There is no reason to doubt, that the influence of Universalism made her a much better woman

during several years of her life—and every reason, to believe that she died in the faith and hope of the final salvation of all mankind.

## AN OPINION.

During the winter of 1812–13, a student for the Universalist ministry, was engaged in teaching a school—which as usual, was attended by a number of youth of both sexes, some of whom were older than their teacher. Among these was a young man, who for several years, had been a member of a Baptist church in the vicinity. Like many others in similar circumstances, he had at last began to wonder why he ever formed such a religious connexion. He of course, knew very little respecting Universalism—but enough to excite inquiry, and inspire very favorable views of the doctrine. The consequence was, that he had become remiss in attending the meetings of his church, and more especially absented himself from its seasons of communion. He was therefore a subject of admonition and discipline; and was in daily expectation of a visit of ceremony from his minister.

In the mean time, it had been ascertained that the "School Master" was preparing for the Universalist ministry; and though not a *preacher*, it was inferred that he was more competent than his pupil to manage a conversation with the good Elder. As fortune would have it, a very early opportunity occurred for testing the correctness of this opinion.

The "School Mater," like many others of the profession, "boarded round"—that is, with the patrons of the school who resided within reasonable distance. And at the very moment of first entering the family of the young man—he was introduced to the mild, venerable and kind hearted Elder. He was a Baptist of the old School—whose plain good sense, and unsophisticated virtues, and sincere piety did honor to his profession and to his denomination. His charities, were too ample for his creed—and his liberality was strangely perplexed "with close communion." He had come to expostulate with his young friend; and if possible, to bring him back to the fold from which he had strayed. He admitted that the subject of his



admonitions, was morally worthy of all praise—but he greatly feared, that such an extraordinary error as he deemed Universalism might lead to fatal results both to morals, and happiness, for time and eternity.

Having discharged the duty of admonition, in the kindest and most paternal manner—the good Elder addressed himself to the Teacher; and expressed his surprise at learning that he was a Universalist. The pious old man was a total stranger to the doctrine of the restitution, and asked with child-like simplicity, a number of questions respecting the views of its professors. This of course, authorised the asking of questions in turn; when in substance the following dialogue took place.

UNIVERSALIST—“In what way do you reconcile the scripture doctrine that God will reward every man according to his works, with the popular views of the forgiveness of sins?”

ELDER—“None but believers are forgiven; and the impenitent are punished according to their deeds.”

UNIVER.—“But this does not meet the

question. For according to your statement, those who are forgiven escape all punishment—while those that are punished are not forgiven. Allowing that all are equally guilty, how can it be said that all have received according to their works, on this supposition?"

ELDER—"Those who are not forgiven are punished in their own persons—but believers only are exempted, because Christ has suffered for them."

UNI.—"I know that such is common opinion; but still, I am unable to see how it can be said with propriety, that those have received according to their works—who have not done so personally."

ELDER—"Why there does appear to be something in that. I have never thought of the subject in that light before—how do you view the matter?"

UNI.—"I did not expect to be called upon to answer my own question—it was asked because I wanted information which I do not profess to have. But that the common opinion respecting forgiveness is incorrect I have now no doubt."

ELDER—"Well—give your own opinion."

UNI.—"I can scarcely be said to have formed one—but it appears to me, that on the supposition of endless demerit for sin, it is impossible to render to every man according to his deeds, and at the same time any be forgiven. But if punishment is temporary, the sinner can be forgiven even if punishment be inflicted. For it is *not punishment*, but *sin* that is said to be remitted."

ELDER—"This is new to me, and as you seem to be candid, I will think of it."

Here the good old Elder took leave, little dreaming that the opinion which had been given, was as new to the young "School Master," as to himself. But the lapse of thirty-years, during which this subject has often been made a matter of careful investigation, has wrought no material change in the views thus expressed.

The Western Association met in June, 1813, in the village of New Hartford; and enjoyed a happy and encouraging session. It is difficult since the multiplication of similar ecclesiastical bodies, to appreciate the feelings with which the meetings of this As-

sociation, were anticipated. Individuals at the distance of 100, or 150 miles from the place of meeting, made their calculations and commenced their arrangements sometime in advance of the session. And when the time came, old and young congregated for the renewal of friendships, to exchange salutations—and above all other things, to enjoy a season of rational and high devotion. All became excited—and there was a power and a pathos in the public discourses, that kindled and augmented the zeal of the congregations; and all felt that it was indeed “none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven.” The best talents in the denomination were called out and put in requisition, and the time and circumstances were every way calculated to make an impression, which would be felt for months to come, in every department of the order.

At this session, “Letters of Fellowship,” were granted to S. Jones, J. Gowdy, S. Miles, and S. R. Smith, as preachers of the everlasting gospel. Mr. Jones had been a Baptist preacher some twelve years; and had already preached the restitution for a

season when he received the fellowship of the Association. He was profoundly destitute of that species of knowledge derived from books, but possessed a remarkable fluency in the delivery of his discourses. His mind was strong and clear, and his language—which frequently defied all grammatical rules, rolled on in one steady and unbroken current from the beginning to the end of his sermons. He was perfectly enamored of the doctrine of illimitable grace, and he preached it in all its fullness and power, at all times, in all places and on all occasions—in sermons of almost interminable length. For when his tongue was once set in motion—the theme was so vast, the subject so grand, so good, so transporting, that he seemed never to know when to stop. Of all our number, he was possessed of far the most natural eloquence, of the most commanding figure and most interesting and prepossessing appearance. He had a noble face and an expressive countenance, and when lighted up by the animation inspired by his subject, and accompanied by the music of a most flexible and powerful voice—few men appeared to better advan-

tage, and none commanded more profound and fixed attention. His constant practice of delivering a whole body of divinity in every discourse. gave a sameness to his desk labors that was unsuited to the wants of any single congregation—but this very circumstance rendered him eminently useful, as an itinerant preacher.

Mr. Miles had also been a Baptist—but not a preacher; and he entered upon the work, with two sterling qualifications, a good heart, and a firm and abiding faith. These have been abundantly testified, by a life of persevering labor and unexceptionable virtue. In the estimation of some, he has impaired his usefulness by a habit of allegorizing, and thereby mystifying the scriptures.

Mr. Gowdy was a Baptist minister—and like most of the preachers of that denomination then in the country. was a very plain, unlettered man. He was accustomed to preach long spin-text sermons, in the very purest ding-dong monotony once so characteristic of that people. How such a man, at that day, came to be a convert to Universalism, was matter of surprise. But the

truth was—he had mind, and appears to have thought more than half his church; and other circumstances being favorable to an acquaintance with Universalism, with the help of his Bible, he fairly argued himself into a belief of the doctrine. He lost little except his tone by the change—and he gained a glorious faith which he vindicated through life, and which fully sustained him with its hopes in death.

Mr. C. Morton, formerly a Baptist, commenced preaching the restitution, and was ordained as an evangelist at Saratoga, some time in the course of this year. With a feeble constitution and sickly body, he has never been as efficient a laborer as many others; but he has ever devoted the energies which he possessed, to the faithful inculcation of the truth. His sincerity and humility have won for him, the sympathy and respect of the members of his denomination.

This Association evinced its solicitude to augment the number of its nominal preachers, by an act of gratuitous courtesy—not to say indiscretion. It was well known, that one of the individuals who received fellow-

ship, had no intention of commencing the ministry under several months at least—if within the year. And yet his friends asked for him, and their request was granted, and he received a “Letter of Fellowship,” as a gospel minister! With what show of propriety; such a measure could be adopted by a grave body, acting for the religious interests of their denomination, does not very distinctly appear. True—the person was well known to several members of the Association—but it could not be known, that he would ever become a preacher. And the Letter, which certified that he *was* a preacher, and as such recommended him to the whole fraternity of Universalists, was entirely in anticipation of that fact. Strange as it may seem, this course of procedure, though seldom occurring, was neither repudiated nor formally abandoned, until after the lapse of more than seven subsequent years.

This anxiety to engage numbers in the work of the ministry, was manifested in other ways, in acts of still greater imprudence. “Letters of Fellowship,” were not only given without any adequate inquiry into



the qualifications of the applicants—but without any proper knowledge of their moral character. The consequences were what might be reasonably expected. Some very honest and well-meaning men were seized with the desire to preach the gospel, whose profound incapacity, was only sustained by their presumption—and others without their integrity, seem to have aspired to the ministry of Universalism as a protection from the obloquy, or discipline which their indiscretions incurred, while connected with other denominations. This at least, is the aspect in which the conduct of several subsequent converts from other sects, is very distinctly presented. But as in many other things—experience, if it has not wholly cured, has greatly mitigated these evils in our Association.

#### A PRACTICAL TEST OF THE TRUTH.

The practical tendency of Universalism, was diligently represented as “only evil;” and that consequently, it was unworthy of adoption. It was therefore natural for its believers, to observe its tendency in the general conduct of its professors. A gentleman,

then recently established on a small farm, had the misfortune to have his house, his stock of provisions, his furniture and even the valuable wearing apparel of his family, consumed by fire. He and his wife were—if not members, at least attached to the Congregational Church, and attended its meetings. As a matter of course, the eyes of the sufferers were turned to the members of their own congregation, for sympathy and aid. A *subscription* was accordingly put in circulation; and very properly presented to the citizens generally without regard to their religious profession. Nor is it probable, that the faith of those most interested, was taken into the account by a majority of contributors. And yet, it so happened—the fact was often named, and was probably never denied—that *the subscriptions of Universalists averaged several times the amount*, given by an equal number of Congregationalists of equal property. The lesson which it taught, will never be forgotten. If this was the result of constitution, it was practical proof that mankind were *not equally depraved*—if it was the fruit of Universalism, it was suffi-

cient to silence forever, the cavils respecting the moral tendency of that doctrine, and commend it to the acceptance of every benevolent mind.

#### TEACHING AND PREACHING.

Some idea may be formed of the general state of Universalism, in most places in central New York, at this time—from the fact, that when a certain young preacher engaged a school for the winter of 1813-14, it was deemed necessary to stipulate, that he might occupy the *school house* a part of the Sabbaths for holding meetings. Even this indulgence would not have been granted, in all places. But Mr. Stacy had preached in this vicinity some few times; and fortunately two or three respectable and influential individuals had become believers in the restitution. It was accordingly soon arranged, that meetings should be held every two weeks—the Methodists having the use of the house alternate Sundays. No provision was of course made, and nothing definite was said about compensation—indeed none was expected. The first and great object was to

obtain *hearers*; all expectations of support being based exclusively upon other resources.

Here then, the double duty of *teaching and preaching* was performed, during the long winter; and to one so inexperienced, the labor was intensely arduous. The larger pupils, and nearly every family in the district, whatever their religious faith, very generally and punctually attended the meetings. So that the congregations were about as numerous, as well as respectable, as any in the place. These meetings were regularly continued about *six months*, during which time, the preacher received many personal civilities—and by way of compensation, *half a bushel of dry apples, and eight or ten loads of wood* for the benefit of his father's family! The remaining Sabbaths were spent in several different places, and altogether brought during the same time, in substantial currency, about *ten dollars!*

Small as this compensation, or rather charity was—it was received with that feeling of gratitude, which perhaps nothing but the peculiar circumstances of the denomination could have inspired. And the preacher who

received it, has seldom drawn more encouraging assurances of countenance and support, from any sum however large or unlooked for, than from these small bestowments. The means of those who gave, were by no means so small as to render such gifts burdensome—on the contrary they were abundantly ample. But it was known that the “School Master” was receiving good wages—some of our older preachers were perpetually declaiming against ministerial salaries—and no doctrine which they preached was so readily received, or half so popular. Poor good men—had they known how little was received by the ministers generally, of all sects, at that time, they would have had little cause of complaint of its abundance.

#### SERMON AMONG OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

It happens to most young preachers, that among their early severe trials—is that of preaching a first sermon to the people among whom they have spent their childhood and youth. Few events are accompanied with such a multitude of singular associations; and none are better calculated to test “the

stuff the man is made of"—than a first sermon at home. There, and all around him, are the men and women under whose eyes his morning-days were passed—there too are the youth, with whom he played and gamboled in childhood, with whom he shared the joys and griefs of young life, and with whom until lately, he romped and frolicked and sympathized in far other scenes and subjects than those which now engage his attention. No matter how pure he kept himself from actual wrong—how innocent his gaiety, or how elevated his principles.—He has assumed a new and a grave character—he has commenced teaching in sacred things—has become a minister of religion; and all ages and sexes that knew him, are determined for once, to test his capacity and satisfy themselves of his pretensions. Every one desires to see him in his new character—to hear what he can say and how he will say it, and to know precisely how he looks and acts as a clergyman. With many, there is a deeper interest—they wish to ascertain whether his heart is in the matter, and if the purity of earnest upright integrity mingles

its influence in his profession. Some will hear him for the ignoble purpose of bearing their part in staring him down—others, because they wish him well, either because they were the friends of his parents, or they liked the boy, or were pleased with the youth,—will hear him for his encouragement. At all events, he will have a full house, and an attentive auditory. Old bigotry itself, will for once forget its obstinacy, and crawl forth to speculate upon the new and strange things to be seen and heard; those of all religions and no religion, “the fearful and unbelieving” sit down together to listen with new interest to a sermon.

The appointment had been made—and the young preacher prepared to meet the very congregation which of all others knew him best; but which, for that identical reason, he most dreaded to appear before in the character of a clergyman. Not that he was conscious of deserving, or so much as feared, either contempt or reproach—it was not the dread of the guilty mind, it was not the withering apprehension of the bashful youth—but it was the singular consideration that

every body knew him, and would witness his success or his fall; and judge of his capacity and principles. Passing the dwelling of a most worthy and venerable member of the Methodist Church, with whose family the preacher had long lived in intimacy and friendship, he witnessed much bustle and preparation for attending meeting. Smiling faces and friendly nods seemed to say—we are all coming, and whether you sink or swim, we shall stand by you and show ourselves your friends.

We may reprobate the grosser forms of superstition as we will, and wonder that sober minds could ever believe in omens—but with all our better light, and the never failing guide of revelation; there are probably few persons who have not enough of the pagan still about them, to induce them to seize on something as the *sign* of good or evil, success or misfortune. This young preacher was sinking under the weight of anticipated embarrassments, which were accumulating as he approached nearer to the scene of trial. The sight of a gloomy and foreboding countenance, would have broken



his heart and overwhelmed him with despair. How very grateful and encouraging it was then, to meet on the first recognized faces, the kindly assurance of a cheerful look! How much of the heart shines out in the countenance; and how many of life's purest enjoyments—how much of its success, of fidelity to its duties and its trusts, often depend greatly upon such trifles as a word, or a smile of approval!—In this instance, the preacher was re-assured, and welcomed the pledge that his reliance on Heaven for support, was not in vain.

The congregation assembled—the hour of service came—and the speaker entered the same house and took his place on the identical stand, where some three years before, he had seen a young man tremble and quail before many who were now again present.—This he remembered; and the recollection tended to diminish the sum of composure which with great effort he had attained. To gain a little time, and if possible some degree of assurance—he very frankly told the audience, how sensible he was of the strange situation in which he found himself placed—

how many recollections crowded upon him—how utterly powerless he stood before them, save in the strength of the everlasting God. This brief parley was sanctified to the end proposed—the preacher stood self-collected, and the congregation gave attention.

The intermission brought the preacher within the reach of salutations from the companions and acquaintance of his whole life; and among them—the friends from whose kind looks he had that morning drawn so much encouragement. The good old Methodist father was there too, gave his hand, and uttered with solemn fervor and peculiar emphasis, “God bless you.” This was so strange—falling as it did, upon a Universalist—coming as it did, from a devoted Methodist—that the audible benediction of Paul himself, could scarcely have awakened more wonder, or inspired more gratitude. And what could this mean? Why, of all living men should he give his benediction to one who had just preached in his hearing, what as a Methodist he could not approve? He might have forgotten his creed, in the recollection that the preacher had grown up under his own eyes—perhaps he was one of those,

who looked abroad and beyond the views of his sect, and believed in quiet, and hoped with assurance in the final restitution of all the human race. However this may be, his blessing did much to assure the preacher, that the hour of his trial in preaching among the companions of his youth and the witnesses of his whole life—had now passed away forever.

#### WESTERN ASSOCIATION—GENESEE BRANCH.

This year (1814) the Association met in Sherburne, Chenango Co., and received a number of accessions by various means, to its numbers and strength. The names of C. G. Person, A. Green and L. Pitts, appear for the first time, on the Minutes of this session, among the ministers of the reconciliation.—Mr. Person was well known to the denomination, as an experienced, able and faithful co-worker in the ministry. He settled about this time, as pastor of the congregations in Duanesburg, Schenectada Co., and Greenfield in Saratoga; and to the latter place he removed from Vermont, or New Hampshire, thenceforward to be numbered among the

preachers in New York. He was possessed of an excellent and discriminating judgement, a strong memory, and good preaching talents. As a counsellor, he had no superior—as a christian, there were none more self-sacrificing, or charitable, or devoted. In public and private life, there are few indeed, who have not said and done more weak and wrong things, than this good man. His life has been one continued testimony of the faith he professed; and the respect in which he has been held by all who knew him is proof of the value and character of his influence.

Dr. Green had been for some years, an Elder of the Baptist Church. Small of stature, of meagre aspect, with a thin and feeble voice, he was laborious, ardent and eccentric. He abounded in good humor—related innumerable anecdotes; and strangely mixed up his fun with his devotions. His patience and forbearance were absolutely inexhaustible. He preached discourses respectable for their soundness and moral bearing; but he illustrated them with the most grotesque and laughable materials. He seemed to recur to things the most singular and out-of-the-way

imaginable; and yet nothing ever came amiss, or in such shape, that he could not mould it to his purpose. But with all his oddity—he was always honored and loved as a good man. He is now low in the vale of years: and may his sun go down with the clearness and calmness that has marked his day.

Mr. Pitts was a convert from the Methodists—and had probably been employed as a *local* preacher. Of his talents or acquirements, little is known; as he remained but a few years in the connexion, which he this year formed with Universalists.

At the session of the preceeding year, the society in Pittsford, then Ontario now Monroe County, was received into fellowship.—It was principally composed of English Unitarians; but being believers in the restitution, they sympathised with Universalists, and united with them accordingly. This was one of the largest and strongest societies in the State. Its former worthy and intelligent minister, Mr. Billinghurst, continued his labors with this congregation. This was emphatically the first Universalist Society in

what is properly denominated "Western New York"—and it took the appropriate name of "The first Universalist Society in the County of Ontario," which then included a tract of country that would suffice for a respectable State. Few congregations have maintained their identity and influence, with greater fidelity or success. Mr. Billinghamurst possessed a well-chosen library, which like his house and his heart, was open to every friend of truth and righteousness. And to this plain, intelligent and good man, and to the Society with which he was identified, Universalism is greatly indebted for its general prosperity in the surrounding region.

There were now (1814) two or three préachers in 'Western New York—Mr. L. Knapp having established himself either with, or in the vicinity of Mr. Billinghamurst; and Mr. I. Parker, of Benton in the same County, who had been present at a previous Session of the Association. It is believed that the latter was a convert from the Baptists; and that he died soon after the time to which reference is here made. He was esteemed more for his moral and religious

worth, than for his pulpit talents; but he exerted these with fidelity and becoming zeal.

The preachers and congregations in this section of the State, instructed their delegate to the Association, Mr. Knapp, to ask the organization of a *Branch*, in Western New York. And after due consideration of their isolated situation—the expense and inconvenience of meeting the yearly sessions of the Association, and the probable, better influence which would be exerted in promoting the cause of truth, it was resolved, that the request ought to be granted. The petitioners were accordingly authorized to call a meeting of delegates, for the purpose of carrying such resolution into effect; which was done in the fall—when the “Genesee Branch of the Western Association” was duly organized.

This, as may well be conceived, was a subject of great interest, as well as importance to the denomination. It told well for the progress of the cause; and was fully appreciated both by its friends and its enemies. Whatever might be the condition of individual congregations—the legitimate power

and influence of the denomination, would be acknowledged and felt in a new, and extensive region. Its sessions, which would be attended by delegates from the parent Association, would not only impart new energy to believers, but would tend to increase public confidence by the introduction and maintenance of a system of order. The creation of this new body, gave a better general idea of the real strength and number of Universalists, than could have been known even to themselves, by any other obvious means.— And this effect was no less valuable, in securing the co-operation of such as hesitated between two opinions, so long as they saw and knew only the few around them.

One additional society—that of “Sherburne and Columbus,” was received into Fellowship, at this session of the Western Association. It thus appears, that from every quarter, the believers in the faith of Abraham, had reasons of encouragement and congratulation. Old societies were gradually increasing in numbers and strength—preachers were multiplying—a new Association had been projected, where only some two or



three years previous, it was not so much as known that any considerable body of believers existed. These were the buddings of that moral wilderness, which has since then put forth blossoms and borne much fruit.

#### ITINERATING.

As a natural consequence, those societies which could command the regular services of a clergyman, would locate the older and more experienced ministers of the order.— And there were generally, enough of such, to supply for a greater or less proportion of the time, all the congregations which aspired to the maintainance of regular public worship. It therefore followed, that with few exceptions—every young minister was compelled to itinerate. This, though attended with many inconveniences, as well as requiring great labor, was probably best under the circumstances, both for preachers and people. It gave many congregations the means of holding an occasional meeting and inquirers an opportunity of hearing the truth, at the same time that the young preacher was acquiring experience. Societies incurred

little expense, and preachers prevented from reading books, studied human nature under aspects, which never could have been contemplated in any other way. The mission of such a minister, is emphatically to all the world. Unfettered by the local considerations and attachments of the settled pastor—the itinerant feels an independence, and expresses himself with a freedom and boldness, that would startle or astonish the servant of a congregation. This therefore is the field in which germinated that species of character, for which some of the preachers of the denomination, are still distinguished; and which whatever their worth, renders them more the objects of respect than of esteem.

But while destitute and feeble congregations were assisted and often established and built up by the instrumentality of an itinerant ministry—the real wants of such preachers were sometimes overlooked and neglected. Many of the older preachers of Universalism, expended in travelling to fill their appointments, all that they received. Others who had it to spare—freely devoted the gatherings of previous years of toil; and

reduced themselves to poverty. And often have these men, travelled the long, weary day, unrefreshed, from "early dawn to latest eve," to reach the place of their appointment. Poorly clad and poorly sustained—who can wonder that they were unknown by the world!

#### PROSPECTS.

The writer continued his studies as far as practicable; and his ministry by occasional appointments in the vicinity of his residence. He did not desire a settlement—preached mostly in places where no organization had been effected by the believers—and occasionally supplied the desk for the clergyman whose hospitality gave him a home, when he found it convenient to preach abroad. His ministrations were certainly felt, and no doubt believed by others, to be of a very inferior order; and leaving him little encouragement of success in new places, and nothing to hope from societies which could command better talents and abler services. It is not very difficult, to form an idea of the situation and prospects of a young man,

thrown among strangers, and to a great extent, dependent upon their sympathies and charities; and who, while he labored and travelled much, and preached nearly every Sunday—did not receive enough to pay his board and defray his travelling expenses.—Why he did not become utterly disheartened—why, when poverty, and neglect, and contumely, lay before him and spread themselves over most of the future—he did not yield to despair, there is but one reason short of invoking a divine purpose—he felt, and he believed, that he must preach the gospel of reconciliation. And at times—in defiance of the darkness and dreariness of the prospect gleams of light would sometimes throw a radiance over what lay in the distance; and hope would lay hold on the promise that truth must prevail. How fully that hope has been verified, can be inferred from the almost miraculous progress of the doctrine of the restitution during the last thirty years. In the State of New York alone, the number of Societies has increased in that time, from *less than ten, to nearly three hundred*—and instead of some *six or seven preachers*, there

are now *more than twenty times* that number—all better prepared for their duties; and all far better sustained.

#### YOUNG PREACHERS.

It has long been a subject of frequent remark, that Universalists were particularly indisposed to encourage young preachers.—And that unkind neglects and discouragements have sometimes occurred, can neither be doubted nor denied. But as one, who has probably felt, as well as observed the nature of this charge in all its common bearings—I am induced to believe that the evil complained of, lies rather in the condition of the preacher, than in the community. It not only may, but it ought to be asked—what the public has a right to expect from a young man who assumes the character of a minister of religion? From the very nature of his profession—it expects that he will possess a respectable education—that he has seen enough of mankind, to be able to accommodate himself to the conventional habits and customs of society—and that he is so far theoretically at least, acquainted with

his professional duties, as to be able to acquit himself respectably on all ordinary occasions.

But those who have given the subject any attention, will not—cannot pretend, that the young men who formerly entered the ministry, were generally in a condition—were qualified, to meet these expectations. So far from it—they were in a great majority of instances, very destitute of education—were greatly deficient in the knowledge of men and things, and were almost entire strangers to theology as a science, as well as to their own need of its instructions. They knew and believed the truth—could sustain it by sound and sensible arguments; and prove it by innumerable quotations from scripture.—Here their strength lay—here began and ended their studies, and their theological knowledge.

It was not in the nature of things, that young men so situated—whatever might be their intellectual and moral worth—should be always well received, or encouraged. It was necessary that they should be known to be appreciated—and being forced to itinerate

almost constantly—it was impossible that they should be known. And as a natural consequence, the person who felt himself neglected or abused by those to whom he looked for countenance—would neither act nor preach with the freedom which he would otherwise have done. Thus his embarrassments would be increased, and his difficulties and hardships multiplied. As an illustration: A young man after travelling nearly fifty miles to fill an appointment which had been *requested*; and preaching three sermons on the Sunday, was presented with about *one dollar and twenty-five cents*—the gentleman who presented it, deliberately remarking that “there was but little of it, but it was probably worth as much as the preaching!” This might have been true to the letter; but there was both cruelty and meanness in its expression. Nor is it any mitigation of either, that the man lived to think differently on the subject. As a matter of course, the preacher never visited that society again—and never forgot the pain that the insult gave him, when of all other periods of his life, he most needed counsel and kindness.

In view of these facts and considerations, it cannot be matter of surprise, that Universalism progressed but slowly; and for a number of years appeared to exert but little influence over the public mind. The wonder is—that under the circumstances, it moved forward so steadily and successfully as it did.—For it not only combatted single handed, the whole concentrated mass of religious prejudice and corruption; but it encountered and to some extent discomfited the learned, without any pretension to science. And there is not probably in the history of religion, a parallel—except in the establishment of christianity, when a few obscure and illiterate Fishermen from the sea of Tiberias, won converts among the religious Jews—overthrew the philosophical theories of conflicting sects and annihilated the “wisdom of the world.” In both cases, the reasons of success are the same—the simplicity and intelligibility of the truth. Nothing else can account for the ever widening and growing power which accompanied the propagation of primitive christianity—nothing but this, could have sent abroad the influence of Universalism with similar certainty and success.



The religious world was high-minded and spiritually proud. A large proportion of the clergymen of the different sects, were doubtless sincere and good men, as they certainly were well educated; and their influence, of which they were abundantly sensible, was almost complete, over the public mind. Men of talents, of reputation, of elevated station, of learning and taste, could hardly venture with safety, either to hear or profess a doctrine so generally obnoxious, so much despised, and so universally condemned. And then—when on some occasion or pretence, they did attend a Universalist meeting—how were all their ideas of congruity shocked!—The place, either a loft in some unoccupied building—or, a school house where the hearers were huddled together in smoke and dirt—or, perchance a barn, in which the farm-cattle would next congregate! Turning their eyes from the *place*, upon the preacher, they saw a plain, unlettered, and usually poorly dressed man—green in youth, or toil and care worn in middle age—brown with exposure and covered with the spots and dust accumulated in travelling. But we are ut-

terly incompetent to finish the picture. The original must have been seen, or the imagination must fail of a just appreciation of the subject.

No matter how gifted by nature, how sound his arguments, or how well sustained by the authority of revelation—such a preacher, so situated, could not be, and was not considered to be, on a footing of equality with others of the clerical profession. It was then, the power of naked and unadorned truth, that wrought the mighty and growing change which, has been and is now being effected in favor of a world's salvation.—Such is the “word of faith,” preached by Universalists.

But we may safely appeal to the general conduct of societies, for evidence of a prevailing readiness to extend every encouragement to all those whom they deemed competent to meet the public expectations. A very large proportion of our present preachers are comparatively young men; and they at least, have little reason to complain of the countenance and support of the denomination. And the reason is plain—they are bet-

ter prepared, by higher qualifications to sustain the responsibilities and perform the important duties of their profession.

A correct notion may be formed of the feeling of friends, in relation to this subject, from the following conversation which took place but a few years since. An intelligent and devoted Universalist layman, residing in one of the western States, was asked why certain preachers, known to be in his vicinity, were not more encouraged? He replied—“That is impossible. I am not very difficult myself; but when a man professing to be a clergyman, appears in the garb, and with the address suited to any and every thing but a minister, it is really quite as much as I can do to introduce him to respectable opposers, as one of our preachers. And it is enough to choke one, to be saluted among strangers, with—‘How are you, Br. G.—how are the folks—hungry for the gospel, eh?—Well, where am I to preach, to-night?—O, where shall I put my horse?’ Nothing short of the special grace of God, can give us prosperity under such auspices. These men may, and indeed they do, preach well; and they are

good and wise men; but with their inattention to the habits and courtesies of society, they never can greatly advance the interests of our cause. No—send us men of equal worth, of equal talents, with better social tastes and habits, and we will engage to give a good account of the progress of Universalism.”

#### LIBERALITY AND PREJUDICE.

It is not uncommon to find persons of much intelligence and great moral worth, who associate the grossest and silliest prejudices with sound religious principles. This is sometimes the result of simple inattention but more generally proceeds from a habit of contemplating a subject in one point of view, or through a false medium. And with all their moral worth, there is scarcely a sect among us, which oftener falls into this error and betrays its effects with more certainty, than the Friends or Quakers. The original disgusts and dislikes of their founders, are still cherished with most unflinching pertinacity, while they have found it necessary or expedient, to do by indirect means, the very

things which they condemn. We say nothing of the sober color, or antiquated fashion of their dress—nor of the obsolete terms of speech persevered in with Jewish determination under every change in the idiom of the language. These, however absurd or ridiculous, are still very harmless affairs; and like the common “stake and stones,” though not very sightly, may serve as the intelligible land marks by which to distinguish their boundaries. We refer to a reprehensible bigotry respecting all preachers, except their own.

Not a hundred miles from Providence, R. I. and among a host of near and remote relatives of all faiths and no faith, an appointment was made for an afternoon lecture. While waiting for the hour of service, at the house of a Quaker sister, she said with great kindness of voice and manner—“S.—” (the christian name of course)—“S.—I shall not go to thy meeting.”

PREACHER—“Pray Sister—why not go to hear me preach? It is but a short distance.

QUAKERESS—“It is not the distance but I cannot go to thy meeting,”

P. "Well Sister, you must act for yourself. Have you any personal reasons for your refusal?"

Q. "O no; I have full confidence in thy sincerity, because *thee* has chosen an unpopular creed, and I believe thee to be a good man."

P. "What is it then? Is it because you are so much opposed to my opinions, that you will not hear your brother preach the doctrine of Universal Salvation?"

Q. "No; *thee* is right in thy doctrine; for the good God can never make his children miserable to all eternity. I cannot hear thee preach, because like others, *thee* receives money for preaching!" And she kept her word by staying at home.

It never occurred to her mind, that the way in which the preachers, or "public Friends," of her own denomination were provided for, was as properly and quite as fully a money matter, as it could be among Universalists. She could not perceive, that giving them travelling expenses, clothing, a horse; or even paying a man for carrying on their ordinary business while they were abroad on

a preaching excursion—had any thing to do with receiving *pay for preaching!* And she would at that moment, have given any one of them, more aid in money or apparel, than her brother who called things by their proper names, had received during the whole year in which he had preached the reconciliation.

#### A MISTAKE.

Mr. Carrique, with whom the writer resided at the time, occasionally went abroad to a Sunday appointment. Sometime in the summer of 1814; he was urged to make an appointment, at the distance of some forty miles, at his earliest convenience. This he accordingly did; but when the time arrived, the indisposition of his family prevented him from attending. And as in all similar cases “made and provided,” the preaching student was sent with an introduction to the proper authorities—an explanation of the causes of the disappointment—and an assurance that the messenger was an accredited minister, and most worthy [young man. Fastidiousness itself could hardly hesitate under all

this; and he was received with all imaginable courtesy and kindness.

Sunday morning came, the congregation poured in from all quarters, and soon filled the house. The speaker made his apology for his appearance instead of the gentleman invited—commenced the services, and delivered a decidedly *doctrinal* discourse. At the close of service, he was introduced to a *deacon of the Baptist church* in that place; and by him invited to spend the intermission at his house. This was accordingly done, in company with several gentleman and ladies—mostly Baptists. Their cordiality and great liberality were matters of surprise; but as it was presumed that opposers were not necessarily bigots, no remarks were made on the subject.

This friendly party accompanied the speaker to church, in the afternoon. During the service, the gentleman on whom he had at first called, and who was a practising physician, was called out, and did not return until the congregation had dispersed. When he entered his home, it was evident that the good doctor had met with some pleasing adventure. He had encountered the *deacon*, of



whom he had enquired—how he was gratified, and what he thought of the young preacher?—The deacon had been in some respects, very well pleased—thought the young man would as he gained confidence, and experience, and perhaps wisdom, improve and become useful—that he was certainly very sociable, which was pretty good promise that he would become a tolerable speaker—but it was to be *feared that he was inclining to Universalism!*

This was too much for the doctor. He roared outright, and laughed 'till the house rang again. As soon as he recovered his composure and his breath—'there' said he 'there, you have the proof that prepossession resists the evidence of the senses. You told that man and the congregation that you were a Universalist—you preached Universalism to them, and yet, they continued to believe, in defiance of all you preached and all you could say, that you were a Baptist!

The truth of the matter was this—It was a *Baptist Church* destitute of a pastor—the gentleman who had given the invitation and through whose instrumentality the appoint-

ment had been made, was one of the committee for supplying the desk. He was a Universalist; and availed himself of his position, to give the church a Sunday's preaching by one of his own faith. Notice had accordingly been given, that the desk would be supplied that day—but none save a few friends knew by whom, it being taken for granted, that it would be by a Baptist. The deacon and the whole church therefore, received the young man as *their candidate*.—And he in all simplicity and without the least consciousness of the state of things, had been deliberately tricked into a gross and audacious imposition. The author of this farce, had the candor to assume the responsibility that really belonged to him; and the affair was suffered to pass over in quiet. Can it be matter of surprise, that such manœuvres should bring contempt and even abhorrence, upon a cause which they were designed to favor? And is it to be wondered at—that those who will condescend to employ such means, should be regarded as destitute of true religious dignity, and christian principles?

## THE FUNERAL.

There were two neighbors residing in central New York, both members of a small Presbyterian society; and both had reached that period of life, when they were distinguished as *old men*. A death had occurred in the family of a mutual friend, and according to immemorial custom, every neighbor, and especially the *friends* of the mourners, were expected at the funeral. But what was to be done? The funeral discourse was to be delivered by a *Universalist minister*—formerly a Baptist Elder, and but recently converted to the faith of the restitution. It was of course, a matter of general wonder and regret, that a Universalist should be called to officiate on such an occasion; and particularly so in this instance, as there existed a species of indignation against the Elder for having abandoned his former faith and religious connections. For as things then were, it was not very unnatural to suppose, that such a man was far gone in mental depravity, and that the next step would be to commit some daring outrage against social order and moral virtue.

Full of these impressions and apprehensions, one of these old men, after much anxious deliberation resolved to attend the funeral. His way lay directly by the residence of his Presbyterian brother, whom he found busy with some trifling matter, and quite out of temper; when in substance, the following conversation occurred:

1st. PRESBYTERIAN—"Good morning Br. E.—, why, it is time you were ready to attend the funeral."

2d PRES.—"The funeral! Humph—I suppose it is; but I sha'nt go."

1st PRES.—"Not attend the funeral of our neighbors, at this busy season, when many *cannot* go—and you and I have little to hinder us! I am surprised at you."

2d PRES.—"Well, I sha'nt go—'Let the dead bury their dead.'"

1st PRES.—"But why not go? What reason have you for staying at home?"

2d PRES.—"There is reason enough. Do you suppose that *I* will go and hear a *Universalist* preach a funeral sermon? What can *he* say on such an occasion? *You* may go, if you like—but *I* shall not attend."

1st PRES.—“I do not know what he will say; but I have thought the matter over, and come to the conclusion that it is *my* duty to go and see my deceased neighbor decently buried. I am not bound to believe what I hear; but if any good is said, I can receive it, even when said by a Universalist. I would therefore go if the Devil himself, preached!”

This was enough. The objector hastily prepared to accompany his friend—listened most attentively to the discourse, and if he was not converted, he was certainly very much gratified. And from that day forward while he lived, notwithstanding the obloquy attached to the doctrine, he seldom failed to attend the meeting of Universalists when so near as to meet his convenience.—Few friends of the truth, filled their places in the congregation more regularly or certainly than this aged Presbyterian. Whether he ever uttered an expression from which any change in his views could be inferred, is not known; but his conduct gave abundant proof, that he had outlived his prejudices, and that he felt a decided interest in the doc-

trine of Universal salvation. His liberality was of far more consequence than he ever supposed. His connections were both numerous and respectable; and seeing him frankly approve, and openly attend on the preaching of Universalism; they felt that they might, and they accordingly did, do the same, with similar independence. It will be difficult for many at this day, to form an idea of the value of the influence exerted by an individual under such circumstances.— And they can only form a proper estimate, by recollecting that it was the infancy of the cause—that it had but few friends—that these friends were prevented from giving their countenance and aid, by every means which sectarian power, policy and ingenuity could devise and apply—and that all these things out of the question, the friends of Universalism were not always, nor often very wealthy or influential. It was therefore, a matter of equal surprise and gratification, to find one in the ranks of opposers, whose example was full of charity, and whose influence was both desirable and beneficial.

## REV. EBENEZER LESTER.

This gentleman was from the vicinity of Norwich, Conn., and commenced the ministry at an advanced age. Where, or how long, he had preached the reconciliation, is not known. But a kind Providence sent him in 1814, to the destitute society in Whites-town, at a time when all other resources seemed unavailing. Like many others of his time, his views were strongly tinged with the prevailing orthodoxy; and in clear and comprehensive perception of the doctrinal simplicity of Universalism, he was far behind the majority of his congregation.— He entertained some of the distinguishing doctrines of Mr. J. Rely—but his favorite theme was the saint's reign with Christ of a 1000 years. He had a passion for this subject. And he probably never preached a sermon, nor discoursed with his friends even for a few minutes without obtruding its consideration and urging its importance. This, he seemed to regard, as the legitimate end and aim of all faith and all good works; and

he enforced it for the same reasons that others do eternal rewards.

Mr. Lester was of course, more in favor with opposers of the restitution, than was the common lot of his ministering brethren. And while the principal members of his congregation derived little instruction or edification from his sermons—he attracted others to his meetings and was the instrument of uniting them to the church. His services were in this way, productive of manifest and substantial good. His age—his trembling limbs—his solemn and dignified decorum, all combined to impress his hearers with veneration for the man; and to inspire respect for his sentiments. He never united with the denomination; though he asked and received in 1815, ordination, at the hands of a Council of his own selection, composed of members of the Western Association. He was then ministering to the Lombard street Society in Philadelphia; from which place, at the expiration of the year, he returned to Connecticut, where he ended his days in peace and in the triumphs of universal grace.



## WESTERN ASSOCIATION.

No societies were this year added to the fellowship of the denomination—but the accessions to the ministry were unusually large and encouraging. One clergyman, Mr. I. Root, a man of strong talents, clear views, and great personal worth, was present at the session, and in the course of the season, located at what is now Mottville, Onondaga County. He was known as an able co-worker in the cause of truth; and his establishment in the country was justly regarded as a new guaranty of the prosperity of Universalism. Nor were these expectations disappointed—but by his death which took place about three years afterwards. He was from Maine, where it is believed that he once preached in connection with the Baptists.

Mr. W. Underwood had preached among the Free Will Baptists, some twelve or fourteen years; but being brought to test the proofs of his creed by the standard of scripture, he felt constrained to abandon his former views and embrace Universalism. He

was a grave, mild and timid man, forever fearful of advancing a step too far, or before the time. He retained many of the peculiarities of the Baptists—especially that phraseology and manner for which they were formerly distinguished, and not a few of their prejudices. For many years, he would recognize nothing but baptism by *immersion*, as the proper initiatory rite of admission to the church—and he could scarcely prevail on himself to admit that any person was truly *converted*, who had not like himself, felt all the horrors of reprobation. And he was so apprehensive of unnecessarily wounding the feelings, or of exciting the hostility of opposers, that while he desired with all his heart to advance the interests of Universalism, he was by many considered rather as the apologist, than the decided advocate of that doctrine.

This timidity materially affected the success of the ministry, and the usefulness of Mr, Underwood. By many of the more hardy members of the societies, he was regarded and treated as too condescending and temporising; while opposers often took ad-

vantage of his concessions, to misrepresent, abuse and scandalize him. So that though honored and esteemed generally by his ministering brethren, he was never appreciated, nor popular with the denomination. His sermons always evinced a strong and sincere desire to promote the moral and religious interests of his hearers; and while he was far from being an enthusiast, he was anxious to witness the growth of a devotional spirit among his brethren. He knew the worth, and felt the power of the gospel; and it was his ardent prayer, and the constant aim of his life, to make men religious rather than dogmatical. He died in the full faith of the restitution—closing an honored life in submission and peace. And although his labors were neither the most arduous, nor abundant, they were worthy of the respect and gratitude of the denomination.

Another convert from the Baptists, Mr. I. Whitnal, received a Letter of Fellowship at this session of the Association. He was a singular compound of good sense and oddity, capriciousness and candor, levity and devotion; but with all his humor and eccentricity,

he was an upright man and a sincere christian. And those whose tastes were not too greatly shocked by his first appearance, soon learned on acquaintance, to appreciate and esteem him. He was not a very uniform preacher,—that is, his sermons were not always equally good; but they were delivered with much earnestness and power, and commonly evinced much thought, with very little regard to arrangement. They were in one respect pre-eminent—they were never cold and monotonous; and were so replete with point and antithesis as to attract and fix the attention of the hearer. And when he appeared, as he sometimes did, dressed in a complete suit of *white*—to those who knew him and knew his solid worth, he seemed as dignified as some others of much greater pretensions, in *white lawn*.

Mr. Whitnal was a terror to opposers; for he literally questioned them out of their positions, and out of their senses. And while he excited violent outbreaks of indignation in others—he was himself, most provokingly pleasant and undisturbed. The following is a case in point—Having accompanied a friend

to tea, whose wife was bitterly opposed to the doctrine of the restitution—he was assailed in a manner that would probably have spoiled the social comfort of almost any other man for a season. The lady made many rude and impertinent remarks, to which he rejoined in his accustomed caustic and cavalier manner—wounding her pride, and provoking her by the severity of his rebukes. At length losing all patience, she seized a *large knife* with one hand, and his collar with the other, and brandished the weapon about his throat and face. With perfect self-command, he looked at the enraged woman and said with great pleasantry—“Strike, ma’am, I am probably as ready to die now, as I shall ever be.” This completely disarmed her—she perceived the rashness and violence of her conduct, and afterwards treated him with courtesy and respect.

Although Mr. Whitnal sometimes indulged his propensity to joke, both out of season and out of place—and thereby impaired his influence as a clergyman; yet he commonly chose his time well, and let fly his shafts

with great effect. And if in the course of a sermon, any thing occurred that could furnish capital, he was morally certain to turn it to account by some pungent remark. As one among a thousand instances, the following is a sample. He was preaching somewhere in the country—when a lady after fidgeting and exhibiting signs of great contempt and disgust, rose and pompously walked to the door. While this was doing, he stopped, fixed his keen look upon the retiring fanatic and said—“See, when the gospel *fan* goes, how the *chaff* flies.”

But he did not always joke. He was really much in earnest; and occasionally apostrophised with most impressive effect. For whether grave or gay, he threw his whole soul into his expression; and overwhelmed his auditors with laughter, or with the deepest feelings of awe and veneration. Preaching once in a large hall, which was unfinished and open to the roof; an opposer left the meeting, and in a few moments a heavy stone was thrown upon the roof directly over his head. He stopped, lifted his hands, and said in a supplicating tone—“Father,

forgive them; for they know not what they do." The effect was instantaneous—and the congregation burst into tears.

#### HOW TO FORM AN ACQUAINTANCE.

The session of the Association was held this year in Homer, Cortland Co., and the journey of about seventy miles, was made on horseback by our company, which consisted of several preachers and lay-delegates. On the day preceeding the session—a genuine Spring day—damp, dreary, with a perseveringly steady and chilling wind, we travelled some forty miles over a detestable road. It would give but little idea of our situation on reaching our destination—to say, that we were wet and fatigued—we were cold, exhausted and covered with mud. But a shelter, a warm supper and a warmer welcome—together with the constant succession of new arrivals of friends, made ample amends for any inconvenience already suffered.

Among the new arrivals was Mr. Whitnal, already named; and who had been but recently converted from the Baptists. His appearance was as singular as his mental pe-

cularities were extraordinary; and he was in all proper senses of the phrase, an "everlasting talker." Too young and too little known to win his attention, I had leisure and opportunity to observe his movements and unflinching tact. He literally flew from one person to another, like a bee from flower to flower—and apparently for the sole purpose of talking and rendering himself conspicuous. Nothing however was farther from his intentions; for no man living was less vain or pretending; and he talked perpetually for the simple reason, that he could not keep his tongue still.

The fatigue and discomfort of the day, sent several of us early to rest—but not to sleep. For the large lodging room, where some eight or ten persons were to spend the night, was directly over that in which our friends were still engaged in conversation; and the clear sharp voice of our new preacher seemed to penetrate the walls and flooring as if they were gauze—and came pealing in with unceasing din. Add to this, the bursts of laughter which his profoundly comic style and manner provoked; and it will be per-



ceived that sleeping was entirely out of the question, At length the conversation ceased, the door of our chamber opened, and Mr. Whitnal entered. My bed was near the door, and turning to me and holding the light above his own head and looking steadily in my face for a few seconds—he commenced.

“Yes—this is Br. S.—; well I have got *acquainted* with all the rest of the preachers; and now you must come to it.”

“Excuse me to night—it is getting late—I am fatigued; and besides, it may take sometime to form an acquaintance.”

“O no; it will take but a few minutes—it *must* be done you know, and may as well be done now as any time.”

There was some reason in this; and while I was meditating whether to answer, or to laugh at our position, he took advantage of the pause, and proceeded.

“When travelling, I make it a rule to tell those where I stop, who I am, where I am going, and my business—this you know saves time and trouble. So in coming here to day, I had occasion to call at a farm house for a drink of water; and while the good woman

was getting it for me, I told her that my name was W.—that I was a Universalist preacher, and was going to a Universalist Association.”

LADY.—“A Universalist—pray what will you do with the case of Esau?”

WHITNAL.—“Why—what of Esau madam?”

L.—“O, he sold his birthright, you know.”

W.—“Yes; but what was his birthright?”

L.—“Why, his *soul* to be sure.”

W.—“His *soul*! Well. do you suppose that Jacob had Esau’s soul? You must remember that he fairly bought it.”

L.—Hesitating—“Yes, that seems probable.”

W.—“And what, do you think, became of Jacob?”

L.—“O, he went to heaven no doubt.”

W.—“Well—do you think he took Esau’s soul along with him?”

L.—Hesitating again—“Yes, that seems probable.”

W.—“Now what do think became of Esau?”

L.—“Of Esau?—Why no doubt he went to hell.”

W.—“But that is rather odd ma’am, that Jacob should go to heaven with *two* souls, and poor Esau to hell *without any*.”

He gained his object—we were emphatically *acquainted* from that time forward while he lived.

Peace to his ashes, and honor to his memory. He was truly “one of nature’s noblemen,” generous, self sacrificing and sincere. In the midst of opposition and reproach, he witnessed a good profession, and with all his eccentricities, he won friends and honored the truth. He died, as he had lived—believing and cheerful, resigned and happy in the hope of Universal grace and salvation.

Three other preachers received Letters of Fellowship, at this Association, viz. Mr. S. Cook, D. Gilson, and U. H. Jacobs. The two latter were men of doubtful worth; and after making much trouble, and subjecting themselves to censure and suspension, they ceased in a few years to be known to the denomination. Mr. Cook still remains, to advocate the truth to which he has consecrated his heart and his life. He sustains an irreproachable character; but from some pecu-

liarity of views respecting social habits and religious rites, he seldom associates with the preachers, or attends the meetings of the Association.

The session of the Association this year, furnished higher evidences of the advancement of the cause of truth, than had ever been exhibited at any previous time. There were more preachers present, a greater number received Fellowship,—there was a better general attendance; and the reports from the surrounding region were more encouraging. No new Societies had been formed—but permanent congregations had been raised in places hitherto unvisited, or inaccessible. And above all things, it was becoming evident that stronger and deeper impressions had been made upon the public mind— So that something like charity towards each other, was beginning to bud upon the various branches of the prevailing orthodoxy. Most of the societies represented, had visibly attained more strength, and it was very obvious that the preachers were both better received, and better sustained. It was not expected that believers in the restitution

would yet be owned and acknowledged as "part and parcel" of the great family of christians—but it was becoming very evident, that their influence was drawing the bonds of brotherhood more closely and kindly among the conflicting sects. Various movements intimated in no very ambiguous manner, that the leaders of different parties, began to think it high time to make common cause against the new doctrine. These movements were less the result of the direct progress of Universalism, than of a growing spirit of inquiry abroad in the land.

From these early and comparatively unimportant movements, vast results have already followed; and others are still in progress, whose influences are not to be estimated. And though it may be deemed arrogant—but yet we must confess our belief, that Universalism has exerted a very large share of influence in producing the modifications of doctrinal religion, so visible in our country. The dogmas which they have rejected as unreasonable and unscriptural, have in some instances been modified; in others, abandoned—and in defiance of the fanaticism

of individuals and sects, there is abundant evidence that both *mind* and *morals* have much more to do than formerly, with the concerns of religion. The consequence even now is, that with occasional exceptions, some of the most repulsive doctrines are not believed, or what is the same in effect—are not avowed. A similar progress will in a few years, expunge every *gross* inconsistency from the creeds; and by rendering christians consistent, promote the spirit of the gospel of universal grace.

Of the nature of the change which was in progress, respecting the preachers of Universalism, some idea may be formed from a circumstance which occurred at this session of the Association. It will also furnish one, among many illustrations, of the unenviable position in which these first heralds of illimitable grace, were placed, in central New York. A young preacher was congratulating Mr. Stacy, on the presence of so many ministers, and of a numerous and respectable congregation—and especially on the better prospects which seemed now first opening to the denomination. Overwhelmed by his

emotions Mr. Stacy burst into tears: and as soon as he could command his feelings, he stated that within a very few years, he had in *passing through that village*, been thronged by a gang of boys who threw small missiles, swung their hats, and hurraed the Universalist preacher along the street!

It must be evident, that in a place which perhaps in many things, justly claimed distinction for moral propriety and religious decorum, these juvenile offenders against common civility, were not the originators of such outrages. The real instigators were unquestionably quietly looking on, and enjoying a species of diabolical gratification in the success of their enterprise. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose, that they were among the "heads of the people," and probably distinguished for their zeal in the cause of religion! For it is difficult to believe, that any but bigots and fanatics could plan—or as much as witness an insult to such a man as Mr. Stacy. It is scarcely possible that he should be well known even by an opposer, and not be respected. And all that knew any thing of his general reputation and per-

sonal character, also knew him to be above reproach. But here, he was a comparative stranger—he was known rather as the preacher of a hated doctrine, than as a man; and the spleen of bigotry could condescend to vent itself through the instrumentality of children. Thus countenancing an act—which as in many other cases, the instigators would blush to perpetrate. But what had others to expect, when such men were the objects of public abuse!

Happily the exhibition of such feelings and probably much of the disposition to indulge in them, were then (1815) passing away. And the *two* neat Universalist churches in the two villages, which were then comprised in the same township, are standing assurances that the opposers of the doctrine stately disseminated there, have far other employment for their zeal and talents, than that of inspiring a mob of boys with a disposition to insult a Universalist clergyman.

#### THE MEETING HOUSE.

Universalism had now been preached in central New York, more than *ten years*, and



yet, there was not a single meeting house exclusively owned and occupied by the members of that faith. Several preachers of acknowledged reputation, had labored most faithfully during that whole period—a number of societies respectable for numbers and resources had risen, which knew and felt all the inconvenience resulting from the want of a suitable house in which to assemble, but no effectual effort was made to erect one, in any instance. There were a few churches in which Universalists were original proprietors; and where they held the acknowledged right to occupy their proportion of time. But beyond this, they could exercise no control.

The reason why this important matter was so long delayed—why no churches were erected, was not because societies were destitute of means, or insensible to their wants—but because societies whose number and resources were equal to the undertaking covered so wide an extent of territory. The members of the congregation were in a majority of instances, drawn from several adjacent towns; and the extreme points from

which individuals and families came to the same meeting, were often some fifteen or twenty miles distant from each other. It was no easy matter, to fix on a location which would accommodate all who were interested. For although the then present convenience of the society might require the occupancy of a given place; it was foreseen that to determine upon its adoption, might be greatly to the disadvantage of some future similar undertaking. At the same time, it was an essential part of the calculation, that the means of all should be applied, and in such a way as should be satisfactory.

A better idea of the difficulties to be encountered in such cases, will be formed when it is understood that the society in Whites-town was scattered over a territory within which no less than *five* Universalist churches and *one* union house have already been erected. Two of these churches are within four miles of each other—the rest are from five to eight miles apart! And the time is not far distant, when several others will be erected in the same district, in places where as yet no distinct organization has been effected.

This society—now known as that in New Hartford—took all the forenamed difficulties into consideration, and decided to build.—And it was agreed, that the number and pecuniary ability of that portion of its members residing in and about the village of New Hartford, entitled them to the privileges of the location of the contemplated meeting house. The funds were accordingly soon raised; and in the summer of 1815, a building of wood was completed, *fifty by thirty feet*, with a small gallery for singers—the whole finished in the plainest possible manner. It will seat about 200 persons—and small as it is, it was found to be abundantly capacious for the accommodation of the congregation on all ordinary occasions. This was undoubtedly the *first Universalist church*, built by the denomination in the State of New York.

It is not possible to convey an adequate idea of the complacent satisfaction felt and betrayed by the members of the congregation, when at last, they sat down to worship God in a sanctuary of their own. They congratulated each other—eyes brightened, and

countenances beamed with radiant pleasure; and strong men that had borne the reproach of heresy unmoved, now wept with feelings of joy. It was like opening a new fountain in the desert—and purer thanksgiving never ascended from human hearts before high Heaven, than was offered on that day, by that congregation. It was a time and an occasion to be remembered for reasons, which no subsequent occasion of the kind can ever furnish to another society of the order, in the State. It was a point, onward which converged a host of great interests to a class of christians, the developement of whose power and influence, and numbers, were now subjects of earnest conjecture. For while it gave assurance of what might be effected with comparative ease in other instances—it was the earnest of the multitude of temples consecrated to like purposes, which were to rise throughout the broad land. The precedent furnished by the erection of this church, other societies soon found it their interest to follow—and they did follow it, with still better results.

It will not be out of place to remark here,

that in a very important particular, the society from the best motives, greatly erred in the *location* of this church. It is not in human nature to go *out* of a town or village to meeting. The current in all instances sets the other way; either because that is the point to which roads converge—or because it is a matter of taste, or habit, or is more convenient to the greater number. Whatever the reason is—so it is, that people more readily go *into* a village than out of it, to attend church. And yet for the purpose of securing a very beautiful site—and under the mistaken impression that it would be a matter of indifference to the public, this first church of the denomination in the State was placed near half a mile from the village. To the confirmed believer, to the devout worshipper, a few rods more or less, in or out of town, will be deemed wholly unimportant—but these are by no means all, whose interest, or caprice, or convenience, is to be consulted. And it is known that liberal persons then connected with, and supporting opposers of Universalism, admonished the society in the kindest manner, but without

effect, to take a different position and build near the Presbyterian church. This advice was disregarded, and two results grew out of the neglect—the establishment of an Episcopal society into which most of the liberal part of the villagers finally merged—and the perpetual but slow decline of the Universalist congregation, until the house has been almost wholly abandoned. And there it stands, like the white marble monuments of the dead in the small cemetery attached, desolate and alone—an unpolluted witness of the impolicy of its location, yet throwing its kindly shade over the final resting place of many who once worshipped within its walls.

#### MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

It was stated that at the Association this year, there was evidence that the preachers were generally better supported. But it is necessary to explain this by facts, lest the reader should misconstrue the terms and draw an unwarrantable and wrong conclusion.—The world seldom knows, or appears to care much about these matters. And when it is said that preachers in a given instance are

better provided for—the inference is perhaps natural, that they are raised above immediate and pressing want, if not some degrees above the condition of most of their supporters. Neither of these was then true of Universalist preachers—though from causes always in operation, some were in better circumstances than others, and received a better support.

A single fact will amply illustrate the enviable abundance, with which the ministers of Universalism were then so much favored.—Of the ten or fifteen preachers in the State—he who from his location, his need, and the number and wealth of his congregation, unquestionably received as good a support as any other, actually realized for his ministerial services, *less* than two hundred dollars in the year. And this includes every item from all quarters and of every description. On such support, the reader will wonder how our condition could be visibly improved; and how, if such was the fact, we had previously managed to live at all! None lived exclusively on a salary, but eked out a subsistence by teaching, or cultivating a

patch of ground, or practising some handicraft, as circumstances permitted. And whimsical as it may now seem, some of these very men were so fully satisfied of the amplitude of their support, that they were constantly declaiming against "fat salaries." It was well for these good and pure hearted men—that they had but few wants, or what is the same, were happily ignorant of their own necessities, which were quite apparent to all but themselves! It is however but justice to add—that in one or two instances, preachers had received \$500 per year.

It will doubtless strike the reader, that the members of societies must have been exceedingly remiss, if not, criminally faulty, in their attention to the wants of their public servants. But this was by no means the fact. That in some instances they were poor, in others thoughtless, in others negligent, is unquestionable; but there was probably not an instance in which a competent support was withheld from mere penuriousness, or unkind motives. No one society could give an adequate support to a Clergyman: and none thought of endeavoring to do so.



Hence, when a preacher was said to be located with a particular congregation, it implied only, that he resided there, or ministered there the principal part of his time. It followed therefore that nearly or quite one half of the preacher's labors, was applied to any place where he could find hearers; and the contributions to his support from these sources, were often meagre in the extreme from want of system and proper organization.

The fault—if indeed there was any to which blame attached, commonly lay in the preachers themselves. As before stated, they often declaimed in no measured terms, against ministerial support. And when subscriptions, respectable in amount were made for them, they have been known to neglect entirely even to ask for their collection. In other cases, where arrangements had been made and reasonable compensation for time, expense and services, put into their hands—they would carefully estimate their expenses, receive that, and return the balance. And this too, by men who needed clothing for themselves, or whose families were in want

of many of the ordinary comforts of life. What could societies do for such men? For both by their preaching and example, they were perpetually doing all in their power, to fix the impression, that it was their solemn determination to relinquish every thing in the form of salary, and to accept only of a bare and stinted subsistence! There may be no sufficient reasons why societies should make their ministers rich—but certainly, there can be none, why the man who devotes his talents, his life-labors and his moral influence, to the religious good of others, should not receive a comfortable support at the hands of those who command his services. And if the world ever furnished a class of single hearted and self-sacrificing men, that example stands out in the clearest light in the conduct of some of the first preachers of Universalism in the state of New York.

And yet however paradoxical it may seem, this semi gratuitous ministry had a two-fold tendency to injure the prosperity of the very cause which it was intended to advance. It diminished the actual number of supporters; and what is still more extraordinary, lessened

the number of attendants on a given congregation. The process was this. A man in moderate circumstances subscribed—say *five dollars* towards the yearly support of his minister. This sum, he was both able and willing to pay. But from the causes already named he was not called upon to pay it in the prescribed time—and it was left to take its course. When the arrangements for another year were made, he was again ready to give his subscription for *five dollars* more. But he soon begins to feel that he now owes his minister, *ten dollars*; and he cannot sit comfortably and hear him preach, under that consciousness. He resolves at once to put the sum into the hands of the committee of the society, or give it to the preacher at the first opportunity. But from a score of reasons which he had not taken into the account—it still remains unpaid. He now becomes ashamed to go meeting, loses his interest in the services in consequence, takes no pains to secure the attendance of his family and friends, and finally, satisfies himself to stay at home. The lookers-on—and there are always many such, some of whom had

become half inclined to make his meeting their own, observe his coldness and indifference, and without any just apprehension of the cause, take the alarm, presume that something is wrong, and turn with vague suspicions forever away from the congregation. Thus, there is little reason to doubt, that the character of Universalism has suffered, its advancement been retarded, and an improper and even false estimate of the resources of the denomination resulted, from the neglect of some of the early ministers to realise what was voluntarily subscribed for their support, and what in general they very much needed.

#### LOCAL MINISTERS.

The time was now approaching, in which the capabilities of the few Universalist preachers, were to be tested under comparatively new relations. Their itinerating habits were to be succeeded by others—far different in kind, and involving duties and labors essentially different in character and influence. They were to become parish ministers. Their labors were to be directed to

the developement and formation of character, rather than to the mere support of a peculiar doctrine and the multiplication of proselytes. Not that it ever was—or ever can be their duty, to dispense with the earnest inculcation of the great principles and proofs of their faith. But, they were now to carry out these principles and doctrines in all their various bearings and influences; and as far as possible to bring them to the “business and bosoms” of the members of their congregations.

Never were men *less* prepared for such duties and services. They were men of sterling integrity—some of them, of great intellectual and moral worth, and perhaps a majority of them what might be considered—good preachers. But their preaching had been almost exclusively directed to the inculcation and proof of the restitution. Their premises were firm, their arguments clear and convincing, their scripture proof abundant and conclusive; and they usually closed their discourses with very urgent exhortations to the practice of every “good word and work.”

All this was very well, and under the circumstances was probably all that could be done, or expected. But it left the particular moral and social bearings of the doctrine of the restitution to conjecture, or to be discovered and applied as accident, or the tastes and talents of individuals directed. Indeed, it may fairly be questioned, without any reflection upon the ministers themselves—whether they possessed any very clear and definite notions on the subject. Exceptions there certainly were—but not enough of them to affect the general remark. And while favorable moral influences were exerted, it is still true, that in general, the great mass of believers and professors were sound and intelligent, rather than deep-feeling and devotional christians. They were keen disputants, familiar with all the arguments and evidences of their creed—they had an utter detestation of the dogma of endless misery, and could expose its fallacy in sober earnest, or what was by no means uncommon, show its absurdity and hold it up to ridicule, in terms of the most bitter and biting sarcasm and rebuke. But it was by no means cer-

tain, they saw in the divine paternity and man's brotherhood that gave to their arguments such orwhelming power—all the reasons for rational piety and pure hearted virtue, which such views are calculated to inspire.

It must be apparent, that men whose whole mind had thus been directed to the study and propagation of a peculiar doctrine, were little prepared for the condition and duties of parish ministers. They had lived perhaps with some particular congregation—they had ministered to it, say one-quarter, or one-half of the Sabbaths—but they had been absent from it *five days* out of every week. And as a consequence, they were if not strangers—at most, little acquainted, and therefore had few sympathies with their societies. They were mere pulpit servants of the denomination—here lay their power—here began and ended both their labors and their influence. They had little intercourse with others, besides through the pulpit, or what was the same both in character and effect, explaining the scriptures to friends, or answering objections to enemies. But of the domestic trials, the

joys and sorrows of the heart, the queries and aspirations of the young and tender minds, of the members and families of their congregations, they had little apprehension. And when they came to settle down as the servants of one or more societies—to be much at home—to mingle with their hearers in the daily scenes of suffering, and sorrow, and joy—they failed to meet expectation.—The habits of study and closet preparation, were entirely out of the question. If they had ever been readers—the experience of years of itinerating toil and exclusion from books, had thrown them into entire reliance upon the Bible and their mental resources. They had by previous and perpetual labor and exertion, become disqualified for sedentary employments; and while they had mingled much with men, it had been under circumstances by no means favorable to the elevation of their social qualifications.

The train of events therefore, which gave the character of pastors to our ministers, threw some of them into obscurity. They seemed to loose their intellectual energy, and the force and power of their ministry de-



parted. True—these results were aided and accelerated by other causes. Great changes were coming over the congregations, and with these a corresponding difference of tastes—so that probably what was once deemed a valuable ministry, had ceased to be so regarded. And the condition of the preachers had been such as in common phrase—to throw them “behind the age.”

These matters were sometimes the subjects of *serious joking*—as well as of much mortification and sincere regret. It must have been seen, that a very large proportion of Universalist ministers, were at the time, composed of converts from the ministry of opposing sects. One of these, formerly a Baptist, was severely reproached by an Elder of that denomination for the incompetency of his new brethren. The reply was alike full of point and power. “What,” said the Universalist, “what could be expected from such men, when it is recollected that we had few except *Baptist preachers* to make ours out of!” This was true to the letter—and the aspiring Elder was both humbled and silenced under the rebuke.

Much as these things were deplored inasmuch as they could not soon be remedied, those who suffered as much from them as any others, endeavored to make the best of them; and sometimes enlivened their accounts of affairs with a comical remark. A substantial, right forward, hard thinking old gentleman, on being asked how his minister succeeded and managed, replied—"In the desk he is a perfect saint, and of course ought never to come out of it into this world—but when once out, he is so reckless and eccentric, that he seems wholly unfit ever to go into it again." The preacher was a good man, and the remark was not designed to convey any reflection upon his moral character. It merely signified that his principal talent lay in pulpit services; and that his social qualifications and mental acquirements were not such as fitted him for the new relations and duties involved by his profession.

#### ACCESSIONS.—1816.

The Western Association met this year, in the village of Cooperstown; and received great encouragement from the location of an

experienced and influential minister, and the addition of four new societies. Such an event would excite no particular attention in later periods—but it should be remembered that it then betokened a gain of nearly *twenty-five per cent.* upon our whole number of societies, and perhaps as much in the real power of the denomination, in a single year. The organization and accession of four societies—respectable for the number and resources of their members, were matters of congratulation and encouragement, while they furnished substantial evidence of progress. They demonstrated—at least to believers in the restitution, that under all the odium and discouragements of a new and hated religious system, its principles were pushing their way forward in the world, reaching the hearts of men and inspiring them with the moral ability to stand forth in the vindication of eternal truth. From such sources the hands of the weary were strengthened—the hearts of the oppressed and desponding revived, and they went forward with renewed zeal and more confirmed hope of early and certain triumph.

The name of Mr. A. Kneeland appears for the first time as a minister in New York, on the minutes of this session of the Association. He had settled with the society in Whitestown—devoting a part of the Sabbaths to at least one other congregation. He brought the experience of a number of years to bear upon the new field of his labor, and the general reputation of talents and acquirements above mediocrity—and certainly much above most of those who were now his fellow laborers. Calm, courteous and gentlemanly in his deportment and intercourse, remarkably plain and intelligible in his discourses, he won the respect of opposers, and enjoyed the highest confidence of his congregation. And it is deemed but simple justice to say, that his location in central New York, was at the time, a matter of pride and of benefit to the denomination. And there were very few preachers then in the connexion, who could have thrown around them a greater number of salutary influences; or given a more elevating tone to the character of the Universalist ministry. The permanent establishment of such a man in the

country, was generally regarded as among the certain means of advancing the best interests of the denomination, and of approximating that standard of influence to which it now had a right to aspire. Nor were the expectations of friends materially disappointed—save in the peculiar form and matter of his pulpit labors. There—while every thing was said and done, in the most dignified and impressive manner—the subjects of discourse were too dry and metaphysical to secure continued interest and attention, or to awaken the affections and improve the feelings of the heart. Of the ultimate career of Mr. K. nothing need be said in this place, as during the two or three years of his residence in central New York, his preaching had no necessary tendency to infidelity; nor did his friends suspect that he wanted entire confidence in the truth of divine revelation.

#### UNPROFITABLE DISCUSSION.

Christianity is characterized by its perfect adaptation to the wants, and weaknesses, and sufferings of mankind. It is its greatest glory that it does good—and the very good

most needed, and which we were least capable of effecting for ourselves. And sublime as are its truths, elevating as are its promises in the abstract—it is in the practical influence of these upon the moral feelings, and character, and hopes, and happiness of man here, that its objects and substantial value are best understood. It is in these life-affairs that the infinite superiority of the gospel, to any and all, of the systems of philosophy, is most apparent. Here is a difference, not alone of speculation—but a practical difference which every man, the weak and the strong, the untaught and the learned, can comprehend and feel. He sees it going where mere philosophy never went, where it never can go, where it was not even designed to go—to the home of poverty and suffering, and to the heart of the vicious, the the wretched, the afflicted; and he sees it effecting there, substantial virtue, peace of mind, cheerful hope and holy resignation.—And he learns from its precepts and its practical workings, that no part of it was intended for captious and empty speculation.

With these facts before us—facts of vastly

greater moment to man, than the grandest metaphysical conceptions ever were, or can be—there have never been wanting those who exert more mental toil, and exhaust more efforts in framing and propagating some useless—not to say senseless theory, than they have ever expended upon the humble and intelligible truths of christianity. For these they have no heart—but they must conjecture, speculate, theorise. And for what?—Not certainly to render truth more obvious, or more attractive and lovely, or the human race better and happier. O, no—but to convince mankind that there is one subject at least, in which they have diverged from the common track of thought. It is not because any moral consequence whatever attaches to the subject—but the desire of communicating and diffusing one's own opinions. They may be right—and what then? must every crotchet be mooted at every turn, merely because it is right in theory?—It is right doubtless, that a man should theorise about many things, that it would be to the last degree preposterous to spend a life of labor and vexation, in arguing and defending.

But unfortunately it happens that such speculations are quite as liable to be *wrong* as right. The field of such labors has neither bounds nor landmarks; and many have wandered there in endless mazes without a single tangible fact to guide them, and without gathering one important truth in proof of the value of their discoveries or to reward their toil.

What matters it to a creature destined to immortality, whether he now possesses the germs of that endless being, which can only be fully developed there—or whether he must wait to be clothed upon with it when he shall come forth in the resurrection! In either case, it in no possible way affects his present physical condition, or moral character. Nor is it conceivable how it can affect his immortality. It is probably enough that he now has a being, and that he will continue to have one through eternity—and just such an one, as the scriptures distinctly assure us he shall enjoy. It may be vastly pleasant to indulge in some conjectures respecting the modes of such an existence—in a spirit world; but when made the alpha and omega of theology, they prove unnecessary and unprofitable.



But whatever degree of importance may be justly ascribed to such discussions, these were the subjects which occupied the investigations and pulpit labors of Mr. Kneeland, during much of the time of his settlement in central New York. A considerable portion of the works of Dr. Priestley had fallen into his hands, and among them, those on "Matter and Spirit." The subject was new to him, and like every thing else that was so—he adopted it at once. The consequence was, he became a materialist, denied the natural immortality of man, and maintained the entire dormancy of the spirit or soul, between death and the resurrection. For these, he seemed to imbibe a passion; and he labored from week to week, from month to month in their propagation. He presented them in every variety of light and in every form, and urged them by every consideration at his command. His discourses were remarkable for simplicity and clearness; and while their subject matter was as new to his hearers as to himself, a respectable interest was manifested. But it was not the bread of life, it nourished no high moral feelings, it promoted

no practical virtues, it stimulated no lofty aspirations—it did no good.

On the other hand, the discussion of these subjects was productive of palpable injury. The fervor of christian feelings, gave place to speculation and apathy; and it would seem that some minds viewed christianity itself, rather as a splendid theory to be realized at some far distant period, than as a present and attainable good. The young lost all patience with the speculations of a cold philosophy, so uncongenial with the ardor of their feelings. And the congregations in which these topics were principally discussed—and which were then among the most able and prosperous in the State—imbibed the elements of declension, still perceptible and still operating. After the lapse of almost one entire generation, they betray the touch of a metaphysical paralysis. The subsequent infidelity of Mr. K. affected no man's faith, corrupted no man's morality—it resulted in the simple and solitary fact, that one Universalist preacher had ceased to be a christian. But his speculations on Matter and Spirit, had rendered many true hearted believers as tor-

pid as so many Egyptian Mummies. Like them they remained flesh and bone—and like them they became cold!

If then it be right to argue from facts, the conclusion is clear that such discussions will ever prove detrimental to the interests of christianity. There were originally “foolish questions” discussed among christians—there are such questions still among them. The great body of disciples, is not composed of philosophers: nor do they generally aspire to become such. And these questions are to them, what the “rue, and anise, and cum-in” were to the Jews—an attendance upon them induces the neglect of “weightier matters.” And it will generally be found, that those societies are most prosperous and their zeal most active and efficient, which have never been occupied with their discussion.

#### NEW FIELD OF LABOR.

Through the kind recommendation and exertions of a friend in the vicinity of Buffalo, N. Y.—the writer was invited to visit that region; which he accordingly did, and spent the summer of 1816 at the village of Will-

iamsville, Erie County. Well received and well sustained, little was wanting save experience and higher qualifications, to render his situation agreeable and give success to the enterprise. It is believed that there were but *two societies*—one in LeR<sup>o</sup>y and another in Riga, now Churchville, West of Genesee River; and of course only *two* within some *seventy miles*. The field of labor was consequently wide, the harvest comparatively ripe; and it was evident that with well directed efforts, much good might be effected. For while the principal friends were influential and devoted, and a general disposition to examine the subject prevailed; there was little effective opposition.

There was indeed no distinct organization, and no previous arrangements for the establishment of regular meetings; but there was a general disposition to give the doctrine of Universal grace a fair hearing, and an unusual degree of frankness in the expression of friendly feelings and favorable convictions. And it was evident to the least observation, that the bonds that bound individuals to a creed and a party in the older communities

whence the population had emigrated, hung loosely on them under their present circumstances. This is always true to a greater or less extent, in every place, where men feel at liberty to speak and act upon their own convictions. They are free—and they feel and enjoy their freedom from the petty restraints imposed by the fear of suffering in their business or reputation, for the sake of conscience. While those fears are felt in their utmost force, by the extreme unpopularity of the principles preferred; many upright minds want the courage to face the probable evils, incurred by the manly profession of the opinions entertained. In the reorganization of society in a new country, these misgivings are thrown to the winds; and man becomes what God made him to be—simply and emphatically an honest man.

On the 24th of June of this year, (1816,) a Masonic celebration in the then *village* of Buffalo, furnished a convenient opportunity for the introduction of Universal Salvation into that place. The appointment was accordingly made; and at 5 o'clock, P. M. the same building and the same seats were occupied for

the service, that had been fitted up for the festival. It was a *new Barn* attached to one of the Taverns—and though its accommodations would now be thought rather humble, they were the best which the place afforded, and were duly appreciated by the citizens. A respectable auditory attended, and gave very patient and candid hearing to a discourse from the 6th ver. of 126th Psalm—“He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Twenty-seven years afterwards, the same preacher delivered a discourse from the same text, to the Universalist congregation in Buffalo, which probably comprised a greater number of persons, than the entire population of the place at his first interview. The village was then rising up from its ashes—but *two years and a half* having elapsed since it was entirely burned by a detachment of troops from Canada—except the lowly dwelling of a widow, and the jail and one other stone edifice which resisted all attempts at conflagration. Such was the place, and the circumstances in which the gospel of

reconciliation was first preached in one of the most important of its locations.

At this time, except on the great lateral roads from Genessee River and along the shore of Lake Erie, the settlements were comparatively few—and sometimes “far between.” There every thing but the eternal woods and waters, was new. —Almost every family still occupied its primitive log cabin—the roads were but cart-paths in the interminable forest—the streams were in most instances without bridges, and the soil deep enough to render every travelled way almost impassable. And yet, it was among these settlements, that the preacher of Universalism was to find hearers, and friends, and hope to raise up congregations! The means of travelling adapted to the place and the times existed; and with the social habits and religious feelings of the Eastern States, the scattered families would, and they did come together to worship God. The Methodist Circuit Preacher and the Missionary were already there. But how different their circumstances! They were sustained by establishments that kept watch over their progress.

But alone, with few except strangers who could sympathize with him, the preacher of a world's salvation went forth literally "without purse or scrip," in humble reliance upon the providence of God and the power of divine truth.

#### INTRODUCTION.

It was in one of the oldest and largest of these settlements, that an appointment was made for a Lecture in the school house immediately after the close of a Presbyterian meeting. No Universalist preacher had ever been there—few persons knew much, if any thing about the doctrine; and some pains had doubtless been taken to awaken prejudices and excite apprehension against the stranger. But the liberality of some and the curiosity of others were proof against the suggestions of bigotry or ignorance—and almost the entire congregation remained to hear and certainly *to see*, the man or the monster that could vindicate such a heresy. As the place was approached, long lines of men, women and children were met, whom it was natural to suppose were returning home.—



But this was not the object. It was evidently for the single purpose of *seeing* the preacher before he entered the house. For with few exceptions they returned and remained through the service; evidently surprised, that the usual forms of worship should be observed by a Universalist.

What an object of curiosity! A lean, pale, young man—broiling under a burning August noon—half exhausted by the fatigues of a morning service and a ride of nearly ten miles—an utter stranger to every person in the congregation except two or three, and by no means assured that he would meet with a courteous reception. And yet no living thing of earth—probably not a ghost from the regions of the dead, could have been gazed at with more intensity. But all else was civil and kind. Of the feelings entertained, and the kind and degree of knowledge, possessed by some persons—and they were by no means singular, respecting the mode and manner of conducting public worship among Universalists—a tolerable idea may be formed by the following—

## INCIDENT.

A farmer in the settlement, whose zeal and indignation against heresy, would not permit him to attend, had in his service what is called a "hired man," who braved the danger of hearing a Universalist sermon, and the wrath of bigotry. On returning home from meeting, the following conversation substantially took place:

FARMER—"Well John, you stayed to the Universalist meeting, did you?"

JOHN—"Yes, Sir, I thought I would stay and hear."

F.—"Did they have any singing?"

J.—"Yes, Sir, they used our books."—  
(Watt's.)

F.—"And did the minister pray?"

J.—"Yes, Sir, and a glorious prayer it was too."

F.—"Well—that beats me, that he should have the audacity to pray. What could such a man pray for?"

J.—"I should think for almost every thing."

F.—"Did he take a text from the Bible?"

J.—“To be sure—what else should he take a text from?”

F.—“But what for a sermon did you have? He told you some strange things I suppose—such as that you might live as you liked, commit all manner of crimes and go to Heaven in your sins.”

J.—“No, Sir—he said no such things, and what he did say was as good as any thing your minister says. And then he recited it off by word of mouth, without any notes, as fast as he could speak.”

F.—“Well, well—we won't talk any more about it. We're bad enough now without Universalism?”

J.—“So I think; and so there is little danger that Universalism will hurt us?”

There proved to be so much liberality of sentiment in this place, that something like a regular train of appointments was established at intervals of about four weeks. The attendance was uniformly good; and the interest excited by the new doctrine, well nigh overwhelmed the power and the show of opposition. The weight of character, and probably a majority of numbers, were palpably

on the side of liberal principles. It should not however be inferred, that there were many real Universalists among them. To the far greater part, the doctrine of illimitable grace, was entirely a new thing. They were disposed to think that it was worthy of some attention; and some were convinced that it possessed high claims to their adoption. And feeling themselves absolved from the religious connections in which they had been educated, they acted with the peculiar frankness and independence so characteristic of the inhabitants of a new country. There was none of the sly, covert arts practised to avoid being known among those favorable to a new and unpopular religion, that are so common and so despicable in older communities. All parties came out in open day light—moderate opposers tendered personal hospitalities to the preacher; and in some few instances, opened their houses for evening Lectures. It is gratifying to place such conduct on record, as what should be remembered to the honor of those whose denominations have seldom sought honor from us by a similar liberality. Nor is it less grat-

ifying to know, that after many years of uncertainty respecting the state of Universalism in that place—a large and flourishing society has recently arisen, furnished itself with a neat and commodious church, and not only enjoys the benefits of a stated ministry, but a great degree of prosperity.

#### GENESEE BRANCH ASSOCIATION.

This body was organized two years previous, as a Branch of the Western Association; and included all that part of the State of New York, lying West of the Cayuga Lake. The district of country thus embraced, was in round numbers, some 75 miles in breadth, and 250 miles in length, and probably included at this time six or eight organized societies, and as many other congregations. It held its annual session this year (1816) in LeRoy, Genesee County, which was probably its first introduction West of Genesee River. Without arguing that children are very certainly inclined to think and act like their parents—it will suffice to say that this Association conducted its business upon the precedents established by the eccle-

siastical body by which it had been constituted.

In those times, we had no "standing committee on Fellowship and Ordination," to which application for either could be made during the recess of the Association. It was customary to appoint a committee, *pro tem.* at each session—whose report was received and confirmed almost as a matter of course. Now nothing can be more obvious, than that such committees,—frequently composed of visiting ministers, and of course entire strangers to the candidates—could but very imperfectly discharge the duties devolved on them. They could know very little of the preaching talents of the candidates—and still less of their personal and moral worth. They were liable to constant and gross imposition, even when no imposition was intended. For they were compelled to rely on the statements of persons, wholly incompetent to judge of the requisite qualifications of a preacher—and unwilling to express their real opinions respecting the moral worth of a neighbor, who took a fancy to prepagate Universalism.

A specimen of this mode of procedure was given at full length, at this session of the Genesee Branch Association. It was ascertained, that a candidate would apply for a "Letter of Fellowship," as a preacher of the Reconciliation. But no one seemed to know who it was—he had not been present during the first day of the session,—and it is believed the application was made to the Committee, by a third person. What could the committee do? They very probably did the best they could with their views of the matter—and as it was understood that the candidate would be present on the second day, it was resolved to associate him in some of the public services for the purpose of ascertaining his *gifts*.

The time arrived—and the veritable applicant made his appearance. He was some thirty years of age, of low stature and embarrassed—without a coat, the sleeves of his linen partly rolled up, and his hair—such a head of hair would have done honor to a second Absalom—but now probably from exercise or fear, it stood out nearly perpendicular to a common centre, the circumference of

which no common hat could cover. How he contrived to wear a hat—or whether he ever did so, was not ascertained. He was seated in due form and courtesy, by the side of the morning preacher, and made one of the prayers. This service he performed to very general acceptance—it was fervid, earnest, and evidently the very sincere supplication of an honest and feeling heart. And on this single test of his ability, he received a “Letter of Fellowship,” as a minister of the reconciliation. Such a procedure was not altogether without a precedent—for Philip met the Eunuch, baptised him, and let him go. But there was this difference in the cases, the Evangelist acted under divine instructions, and the Association on its own fallible judgement. To his honor however, the candidate proved to be a good man; though his ministry has only been occasional. And while there was much of the strange—if not ludicrous, in the circumstances of his admission into the order, it was honestly intended, and is not known to have produced any evil results.



## THE LECTURE.

It was customary on the meetings of the Association, for the preachers to go out several miles for an evening Lecture, to such places as the friends designated. In this way, several different neighborhoods were furnished with the opportunity of hearing the gospel, which no other occasion might soon furnish. One of these appointments was made for one of our oldest preachers—whose kind spirit and conciliating manner, were deemed sufficient to secure a patient hearing, and pledges of favorable results.

The meeting was held in a small and miserable school house, lit up with *two* or at most *three* diminutive tallow candles, the flame of which was rendered extremely dubious by the vagrant puffs of air from the broken windows; and the concentrated light of which was barely sufficient to enable the speaker to see the faces of his hearers. The seats were nearly filled, and the services progressed—the preacher establishing, and confirming by brief arguments and numerous quotations from the Bible, the great and mo-

mentous truth of Universal Salvation. He had proceeded in this way in his usual familiar style for some thirty minutes, when an event perfectly illustrative of the state of public feelings, and of the spirit in which it was sometimes met—occurred. The preacher had closed an argument with a proof text so clear and decisive, that he announced the inference to be the substantial *truth* of Universalism.

This was too much for one of the hearers. Half rising in the obscurity, he broke in upon the speaker with—"That's a lie, *a lie*, A LIE," in a most angry tone, at the same time making his way to the door. The preacher, not in the least disconcerted, and in his ever mild and peculiar manner, called out—"Stop, stop—Brother, do'nt be so hasty—stop and let us talk the matter over." But the man was too angry and too intent on making his escape, to heed the request. But he had reckoned without his host, and soon found to his amazement, that it was no easy matter to get beyond the reach of the demand to stay and hear. For the preacher seized the only candle within his reach—rushed to the

door laid hold on the retiring and angry man by the arm—and literally detained him by force. During this movement, the words, “*stop, stop, Brother,*” were repeated several times. The man finding himself “brought up” in the entry, or just outside the door, consented to hold a parley—the result of which was, that the preacher led him back in triumph by the light of his candle: and he remained quietly through the services.

#### THE LABOR OF ONE DAY.

It is not intended to represent, that preachers of Universalism performed daily, such labors as we are about to describe; but that most of them did at the time occasionally perform such, is not to be questioned. And that they were at this period, (1816,) in the fullest sence, “working men,” might be shown by the distance which they travelled, and the number of discourses which they delivered.

At the urgent request of a preacher present at the Genesee Branch Association, who resided in the vicinity of Canandaigua, an appointment was made for a young preacher

on the following Monday in the town of Gorham—distant some 60 miles. The young man was to preach on the intervening Sunday, off from the direct route, and the distance thence to the place of subsequent appointment, was unknown. Travelling on horseback, at noon on Monday, the young man had reached what is now the City of Rochester—then principally covered with primeval trees—a few newly erected buildings, more in progress, and innumerable stumps either standing or piled in long rows in what *was to be* the principal streets—and forty miles from the place of meeting.

The appointment was at *five* in the afternoon—and as mile after mile and hour after hour were counted off, the physical exhaustion induced a strange feeling of apathy; and to reach the place, to find friends, to lie down to rest—and if necessary to die, occupied almost entirely the languid thoughts. He reached the place within thirty minutes of the designated time, having travelled in about eight hours nearly sixty miles without refreshment. "How grateful was the "cup of cold water," which restored his almost faini-

ing spirit—and the sight of a few friends who sympathised in his sufferings. The meeting was in a private house, the little congregation was already there; and in a few minutes he was discoursing to them concerning the great salvation, half unconscious of his weariness. With what terrible vividness are the sufferings, the solitude the exhaustion of that day of toil impressed upon a memory abundantly tenacious of scenes and events less worthy of recollection! And poor and wretched as he found the author of the appointment, destitute of every thing for comfort, except a family, and wanting the self-respect that belonged to his profession—so keen were the recollections of the anguish of the preceding day, that it was impossible to feel the charity and pity for him which his condition seemed to demand. It might not be very kind or indeed right, to indulge these feelings; but it must be a very active and persevering benignity, that may not be taxed beyond endurance.

How rapid, and how surprising have been the changes wrought by a few years in the region to which reference has just been made.

For fifteen miles to the southwest of Rochester, there were probably not a dozen families on the main road—and that village, was then in the midst of a forest. But the moral changes have kept pace with the physical.— In the distance of *sixty miles* there was but one Society of Universalists; and very few, if any individuals out of its immediate vicinity, known to believe the restitution.— There are now some eight or ten societies with nearly as many churches, in that region, holding and exerting their share of influence over community. For this moral progress—this advancement of liberal christianity, the denomination is greatly indebted to Messrs. Billingshurst and Knapp—the former of whom was a strong and faithful advocate at home—the latter went from house to house, “preaching the kingdom of God.”

#### A NEW SOCIETY.

The congregation in Williamsville, was composed of liberal persons, although more or less of the individuals were members of the churches of opposing sects. The Universalist meeting was the only one which

was regularly sustained; and of course, those who felt it a duty to attend church, as well as those who preferred the doctrine, were generally hearers. Under these circumstances and after a little inquiry respecting the practicability of finding a sufficient number to sustain the effort—it was determined to form a society. The legal forms and preliminaries were accordingly observed; and a society duly organized consisting of about twenty-five male members. This occurred probably in August, 1816, and constituted the third society West of Genesee River. Notwithstanding the gratification felt by friends in this event, it was still also felt that it was but a solitary point in a vast moral wilderness—a single green spot, constantly liable to be overwhelmed and lost in the mass of surrounding and discordant matter. And these anticipations proved in the event, to be but too well founded. There were but few substantial Universalists—few that had any proper appreciation of the nature and influence of the great doctrine of a world's salvation. While those remained in the place, the society maintained its identity. But they

removed—and with them went the strength, the moral power, and finally the very existence of the society. Let it not be inferred that there was an abandonment of principle, or a renunciation of truth in this dissolution of mere organization. Those who had the principal influence, merely carried that influence with them, and exerted it successfully in other places, and over other communities.

#### CHAUTAUQUE—1817.

Several pressing invitations had been received from individuals in Chautauque Co. for a preaching visit from the young man located at Williamsville. Accordingly, he visited and preached in different parts of the County, early in January. This was also new ground. But there was the general disposition, so visible in other places, to hear what was called—"the new doctrine." The preacher was cordially received; and the congregations both on the Sundays, and the week-days, were unusually large. There were a few Eastern people, who had drunk at the fountains of truth; and the avidity with which they again gathered to its wa-



ters, can be better conceived, than described. Isolated from the friends of their early life—cut off by distance, from the associations and many of the privileges of former years, there was to them, a renewing of many grateful scenes and seasons, in once more meeting to worship God with Universalists. These exerted themselves to induce others to attend and share their joy. They spread the notices of appointment—they obviated objections—and in their zeal, they greatly overrated the talents of the preacher. But their object was attained; and apathy, and indifference, and prejudice, yielded before their enthusiasm—and people of all creeds and no creed, came and listened to the message of Universal Salvation.

This visit was the preliminary step in the establishment of a circuit, which in its windings to and from the vicinity of Buffalo, embraced about 250 miles. And from this time, during most of the year, this distance was very regularly travelled every four weeks. The number of discourses usually delivered in making the circuit, varied from *twenty* to *thirty-two*—that is, from five to

eight per week. It was unquestionably an act of great courtesy and charity in the respective auditories, to call these discourses by the name of *sermons*. However this may be—he who delivered them, always felt the deepest gratitude to those who condescended to hear them. Such as they were—they were as well adapted to the circumstances, as the nature of the case would admit.—They were generally *doctrinal*, in the peculiar sense of the term; and if not very profound, were such as the public mind seemed to demand.

It was the wish of friends, and the prevailing expectation of others, that the distinguishing doctrines of Universalists should be stated, proved and defended in every discourse. For it was entirely a new thing to the many; and by the few to whom it was not, it was but imperfectly understood. It was not foreseen however, that a compliance with this general desire, would involve the performance of yet another and a very different work—that of exposing the weakness and absurdity of the dominant creeds. And familiarity with this mode of enforcing truth,

by exposing error, led on to other consequences. We became unmercifully severe upon other sects. *We?*—Yes, for the practice obtained almost universally, among the ministers of the denomination.

#### LIBERALITY.

There are few things that give to the friends of a system which is generally despised and reprobated, so much pleasure, as to meet with genuine *liberality* in an opponent. It makes us feel our common brotherhood, under the best and kindest influences; while we perceive that there are good and noble minds which do not spurn us because we are not of their sect, or party. An instance in point, occurred during one of the monthly circuits above named, at a public house on the shore of Lake Erie. The long winter evening was spent in company with a sensible, well educated, frank and kind hearted Presbyterian clergyman. He was already on the “down hill of life,” and had evidently seen and felt many of the changes which come over man. “Ah,” said he, “your doctrine appears to me to be very

erroneous; but it must be admitted, that it is an error on the side of charity, and has many things to recommend it to the benevolent heart. And representing as it does, the Deity, in all his character and perfections, in the most amiable light—it seems almost illiberal and narrow-minded, not to wish you every success.”

In the course of conversation, he was informed of the arrogance and incivility of one of his young brethren, on a public occasion, in which he happened to be associated with a Universalist. To this, he replied—“Well, you pitied him, I hope; that you forgave him ought not to be doubted. He certainly needed pity; for he must have appeared very ridiculous and contemptible, in the eyes of all sensible and respectable persons, in displaying his bigotry when he was publicly bound to show a tolerant spirit. But you may console yourself with the assurance, that one Presbyterian clergymen at least, despises such conduct; and we will all hope, that as he grows older he will grow wiser, and that his zeal will be tempered with more knowledge and more charity.”

He enquired if the preacher with whom he was conversing, had ever known any thing of Rev. Geo. Richards, and especially of the manner of his death—and whether it was not common for our opposers of all sects, to make unkind remarks respecting him. He was told, that it was known that Mr. Richards committed suicide in a paroxysm of insanity, while confined in the Pennsylvania Hospital. He then said he was a class mate of Mr. R. when in college—that notwithstanding the change of his views from a Congregationalist to a Universalist, they had always lived in friendship—that he and every man knew that insanity was not a crime, but a disease, and consequently that no person when insane was accountable for his actions. And he concluded by saying with much feeling and emphasis—“If there is a Saint in Heaven, I believe that George Richards is there with him.” This was worthy of a Fenelon—why can not such sentiments more prevail; and man be esteemed for his moral worth independent of his creed?

## ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN.

It may be useful to place here, an incident, which contrasts in some particulars with the foregoing; as it may serve to show the difference between a practical liberality under the strong restraints of a creed, and a liberal theory that disregards all opinion. A religion that was worth the labor, and sufferings, and death of Christ, is worthy of our honest and open profession. So far nearly every member of every denomination is ready to go in theory. But unhappily for the purity and simplicity of christianity, theory and practice do not always coincide, and are by no means certain to be found in the same person. Many a non-conformist in theory—perhaps in principle—will be found practically of most unimpeachable conformity to the dominant creed. So that whatever they may be in reality, one thing is certain—they are determined never to be hung or burned for the rights of conscience. They would as soon worship with the Papist as Protestant, were the chances of reputation or interest involved—they would acknowl-

edge that Mahomet was a prophet of God, to preserve their character among the faithful—and they would perform the mummery of a pagan ritual and worship at the shrine of an Idol, sooner than endanger a single hair of their heads.

Unfortunately these men are of a class who lead, or who aspire to lead the public mind. They are not content to follow their own bearings alone. And though their course is decried by almost all men, still thousands from indolence or want of moral courage, adopt it as the most convenient, or the most secure. The odium of policy is so softened by the plausible sound of such terms as—philosophical, or liberal christians, that many well meaning persons mistake indifference and even skepticism for a more improved and more rational christianity.

In the Summer of 1816, a clergyman visited a Universalist family with whom he had been previously acquainted, and who at the time were boarding a Universalist preacher. The mere forms of introduction served to designate the religious professions of each of the clergymen, who independent of the dis-

parity of age and attainments, met on equal terms. The conversation was free—the visitor spoke of the progress of liberal opinions both in Europe and America—of the sympathy which ought to exist among the more liberal sects, and of the common cause which they should make against an overwhelming orthodoxy. The coincidence of the leading doctrines of several sects, was spoken of, and of course among them, the great doctrine of the final reconciliation and happiness of all the human race. He admitted his belief in Universal restitution, and treated the dogma of endless misery as only worthy of rejection or contempt.

QUESTION—“Then you do not think that the Bible teaches the doctrine of endless misery?”

ANSWER—“No: some believe that it teaches the annihilation of the wicked; but I think that the scriptures teach the restoration of all mankind.”

Q.—“Then *you* do not suppose that the words rendered *eternal*, *everlasting*, *forever*, can prove endless duration?”

A.—“No; and no man with any tolerable



knowledge of the language in which the scriptures were written, can suppose it. He must know that the words are equivocal, and that the *thing* must first be proved to be endless in duration. But it has never been proved that misery is necessarily endless."

Q.—"How then do you dispose of this matter, when you have occasion to use these terms in connexion with punishment? Your hearers attach a meaning to them which you *know* to be wrong—do you set them right?"

A.—"That is no concern of mine. I use the terms as I find them, and leave others to understand them as they please." He was a Unitarian.

#### A MIXED CONGREGATION.

In the new settlements, and during the long winter-evenings, it was customary to hold Lectures in private houses. This afforded an opportunity to many to attend a Universalist meeting, who could not otherwise do so; and the neighbors usually came in from several miles. We say *neighbors*—because, when people are scarce, those within the distance of some ten miles, are so con-

sidered. This circle narrows as the population increases—and it is scarcely a figure of speech, to say that the very feelings and sympathies of the heart, contract in the same ratio.

In all new countries blest with a good soil, the roads are utterly detestible—often almost impassable; so that nature seems to have passed an interdict upon all communication, except by daylight. It is therefore the season of winter, proper, when solid ice has been substituted for two feet of mud—and when an additional two or three feet of snow has been well trodden and pathed, that the distant neighbors enter in good earnest upon social communion. Then every conceivable mode of conveyance at all adapted to the season, is put in requisition. Huge sleds drawn by oxen, and scarcely less bulky and heavy sleighs and cutters drawn by horses, are turned to account in the daily and nightly transportation of passengers.

An important appendage of nearly every family—is a dog. They are kept for every day use, for protection at night, for company for the women at home, and for the men

and boys when abroad; and constitute a kind of family factotum. And whenever the household makes a regular turn out, Growler has his holliday, and is sure to make one of the party. On special occasions, such as trainings, town meetings and elections, he is often one of the most quiet and peaceable.

It was at an evening Lecture during the sleighing, when a general turn-out filled the rather spacious room of a good Methodist neighbor—for Methodists opened their houses for Universalist preaching—that the services were disturbed by an almost unceasing noise. The speaker gave as little attention to it as possible, and made no remark respecting it; but endeavored to mind his own business—which will generally be found best under any circumstances—and as all appeared attentive, matters were suffered to take their course. In due time the services ended; and as the moon would rise directly, the congregation sat, sung and chatted during the interval. This gave the speaker an opportunity to ascertain the cause of the annoyance which had occurred: there were *nine dogs, and fourteen young children* in the congregation!

## NOT FELLOWSHIPED.

An evening Lecture of several weeks standing, was held in a vicinity where a few active friends exerted themselves to secure the attendance of a good congregation. The meeting was held in a school house—one of the most commodious in the whole region.—A Methodist clergyman of considerable notoriety, taught school in the building; and knowing that many of his patrons with their families would be present—he also attended. He very courteously took a seat with the speaker, to whom he was already known; and at the close of the discourse was asked to make the concluding prayer. He expressed his entire willingness to do so—but desired first to make one remark to the congregation. This request was of course granted to him, and in substance, he went on to say—“That as a clergyman, he trusted that it would ever be his pleasure, as it was his duty, *to pray.* at all suitable times and in all places—that having been invited to close the present services with prayer, he felt at perfect liberty to comply with that request

—but wished the congregation to understand that he did so merely as a *minister*, and not as expressing any fellowship for the preacher or his opinions.”

He then kneeled, and poured out before the altar of God, one of the most fervent supplications ever offered in human language. It was a service in which he greatly excelled; and wholly forgetful of what he had just previously said, the full spirit of Universalism was expressed in every petition. He besought the Deity to be gracious to his erring creatures; to remit the transgressions of the whole race of man, of all times and all conditions; to send forth and render efficacious the principles and power of the gospel; to bless all that were entrusted with the message of truth and salvation, of whatever sect or name; to hasten the time when all darkness should be succeeded by light, all error by truth, all sin by holiness, all suffering by enjoyment—when Christ should complete the work of Grace, and “God be all in all.”

Nothing could be more appropriate than this prayer—nothing, more in accordance

with the spirit and doctrine of the sermon. And as the congregation rose to receive the benediction, the speaker observed—"My Methodist brother informed you that he should pray, simply as a minister, and not in fellowship with me, or my opinions. But I have preached Universalism to you, and he has devoutly *prayed for it*—and I submit it to you whether it was in fellowship or not."

So striking was the coincidence, and the idle disclaimer so ludicrous, that the congregation found great difficulty in suppressing a laugh. It need scarcely be added that the good Methodist preacher betrayed the feeling of deep mortification.

#### WHERE TO FIND UNBELIEVERS.

The reader has been told, that in the new settlements it was found convenient to make appointments for Lectures in all the different neighborhoods, that all might have an opportunity of hearing. One of these Lectures was to be held at a private house, several miles from the usual place of meeting, and where the preacher was a stranger. The snow was some two feet deep, and the cold

—such a cold as comes but once in a quarter of a century. It seemed to clear and deepen the bright vault above, which when gazed up into from among the tall and gigantic trees that stood close to the pathway, inspired one with unwonted awe, and awakened new ideas of the magnificence of the Universe.—A fine pearl-like frost dropped now and then in some supremely beautiful form, as if to show the strange splendors of an invisible world; and display to mortal eyes the minuteness, and perfection, and variety of the works of Omnipotence.

At length reaching a small settlement, and judging from the time spent in travelling that this must be the place—and especially admonished by the cold, that it was certainly safe to find a fire, a halt was made at the first house. The door was opened and a chair offered before a fire that would have done great honor to an old English manor house on a Christmas night—and two middle aged ladies, busy at their work, made kind inquiries whether their new guest had frozen fingers or toes, nose or ears. It was apparent from a discreet whisper, that he

was recognized; a child was sent—some-where—and a man about sixty years of age immediately entered. He offered his hand *guessed* that the stranger was the Universalist preacher, congratulated himself on having a few minutes conversation with him, and disclaimed all ability or inclination to hold controversy with a clergyman.

This apology was duly appreciated, for it was quite apparent, that whatever else he might mean—he intended to maintain his side of the controversy by a string of questions. Accordingly, passage after passage was introduced accompanied with a significant—“what can you do with that?” At length, having exhausted his vocabulary, or from some other cause, he seemed about to conclude the conversation by consoling himself with the reflection—“that if Universalism was true, it would certainly find him and finally save him.”

UNIVERSALIST—“Yes—but will you excuse me for telling *where* it will find you?”

HOST—“I don't understand you—it will find me I suppose, where it does every body else.”



U.—Not exactly. But as I am a young man, I fear you will be offended if I tell you where you will be found.”

H.—“O, not at all. And I am anxious to know what you mean.”

U.—“Well, Sir, our interview has been quite pleasant—I have received both your hospitality and courtesy, and I should be sorry to give offence at parting.”

H.—“Never fear. I promise not to take offence.”

U.—“Very well—whenever Universalism finds you, it will find you in *Hell!*”

H.—“In *Hell!* How can that be?”

U.—“Readily enough. In that case Universalism will be true—you will be an unbeliever—every unbeliever is in a state of condemnation—and that according to your views constitutes hell. Of course, *that* is the place where you will be found.”

Under other circumstances this might have been impertinent. But during the conversation he had repeatedly tried to be witty at the expense of charity, as well as Universalism. His guest therefore felt at liberty to say what in his own view, was believed to

be the truth—though it was a construction of the word *hell*. of which the old gentleman was probably unaware. He *tried* to keep his promise—hesitated—held out his hand—responded very dryly, “good bye,” and shut the door.

#### WESTERN ASSOCIATION.

The session of the Western Association for this year, (1817.) was held in the village of Nine Mile Creek, Onondaga Co., where a society had been previously formed. A large proportion of the ministers in the State were present; and the reports of delegates, and societies not represented, gave encouraging assurance that the cause of truth was progressing. *Four or five* new societies were received into fellowship at this session; and one very able and experienced minister had established himself in the vicinity. The Rev. I. Root, already named, formerly and for many years, an Elder among the Baptists—a sound thinking, plain and hard working man, removed from Maine and settled in Mottville, a small village in Skeneatles, in the county of Onondaga. His talents, his

worth, his reputation and consequent influence, rendered him a valuable acquisition.— He was already known, not only from a previous visit, but from the estimation in which he was held by the Universalists of New England, with whom he had ministered several years.

The *second* church owned by the denomination in the State, was now in progress of erection in the city of Hudson—where a strong and energetic society had been recently formed. The almost instantaneous development of liberal principles, has seldom been exhibited in a more surprising manner, than in the establishment of this society.— Only a year previous, but one or two individuals in the city were known to be Universalists. By their interest and influence, a lecture was held by a visiting clergyman in a *private house*; which was attended by some *twenty* persons. A second Lecture was held on a subsequent evening, in the same place; the notice of which, was only circulated among acquaintances. The congregation was now too large for the place; and a meeting in the Court House was notified. A large

and respectable auditory assembled; and after a few subsequent meetings measures were taken for the support of preaching—a minister employed, a society formed, and in little more than a year permanently established in a good church of their own.

New societies and congregations were thus springing up in every direction, and though often separated from each other by many miles, it was natural to infer that other places in the intervening distances would in due time receive the message of eternal truth. And in many instances these expectations have been realized, and thousands, and tens of thousands who then “sat in darkness—bound in affliction and iron,” now believe with joy in the salvation of God.

There were now between twenty and thirty organized societies in the State, and about half as many preachers. The denomination in New England, had made one, or more attempts to sustain a periodical devoted to its interests, and had failed. Nothing of the kind had yet been tried in New York.—The only existing means of making an impression on the public mind, and of advanc-

ing the cause of truth was therefore limited to the exertions of less than twenty ministers, aided by their respective congregations. But by far the greater number of societies were feeble—the preachers had not the leisure, nor always the ability, to prepare such articles for publication as the situation of affairs demanded; and it was hazardous for poor men to publish on their own responsibility, what after all, might prove detrimental to their interests.

And yet, this was the identical situation from which, every member of the denomination drew encouragement. There were many reasons why they should do so—for hopeless as it may now seem, it was much better than it had been at any former period. And the writer of the Circular Letter, which accompanied the Minutes of Association for that year, poured forth the feelings of his heart, and expressed his anticipations, in the following terms addressed to the preachers:

“New churches and societies have been formed, and accessions to former establishments have been numerous. God is giving you many souls as stars in your

crowns of rejoicing, and as seals to your ministry. Let this service be, then, as the first ripe fruits, consecrated to God; and redouble your diligence, that the latter harvest may be abundantly plenteous. You are now surrounded by many helpers in the Lord. \*

\* Now is the time for you to work—for the Lord is working. The minds of the people are seriously affected, and an universal concern to know the truth prevails. Be assured that the time is drawing near, when Christ shall appear for the final overthrow of the empire of the adversary, and the complete deliverance of the church.”

#### A REVIVAL.

This year (1817) was productive of one event of singular importance to the character of Universalism. It was the commencement in one of the older societies, of what is denominated a *revival of religion*; and which in its progress extended far and wide over the denomination. It made its appearance at a time, when the fervor of similar excitements begins to decline; and it acquired new subjects and rolled on with increasing power

from year to year. This extraordinary movement commenced sometime in the spring, in the Universalist society in Hamilton, Madison County—spread gradually over the congregation—went abroad and won converts on the right hand and on the left—produced astonishment and then consternation among opposing sects, at its progress; and augmented the attendance on the meetings for public worship beyond all precedent.—The voice of fervent supplication, the song of praise went up from the dwellings and from the fields—from the hill-side and from the valley; and whenever men met, whatever else they did, they talked of the fulness and freeness of the “grace of God that bringeth salvation.” And the traveller as he passed along the highway, heard the singing of hymns, and saw groups gathered for prayer and thanksgiving.

One of the first results of this movement was to silence the cavils of opposers respecting the religious feelings and susceptibilities of Universalists. It had been said from the first rise of Universalism in the country—said with great confidence and effect—that

there could be no religion, no true spiritual godliness among professors who were never warmed into newness of life by the power of a revival. And this was belived—certainly by the great body of professors of all sects, and by thousands more who took things as they found them in the religious world. Indeed, many Universalists, who were still influenced by their former habits of thought—though fully convinced of the truth of the doctrine of the restitution, wondered, and sometimes regretted that God did not favor his truth with this special seal of his approbation.

The influence of this excitement upon the minds of opposers, and those too, who had the very best opportunities of judging of its identity with all others in its characteristics, will appear from a single illustration. The Presbyterian and Universalist societies respectively held their meetings for public worship at Hamilton Centre, on opposite sides of the same public square or common. The former occupied a church—the latter, a school house, though constituting by far the larger congregation. It was the *communion*



of the Universalist Society; and as usual on those occasions, the house was not merely filled, but many accommodated themselves as they best could, about the door and around the building. The Eucharist had been administered, and the hymn given out with which the services would close, when a general movement at the door drew the attention of the congregation. As soon as room could be made, *the Presbyterian minister, the Elders and a majority of the members of that church entered.* All were visibly and greatly excited, and it was apparent that some unusual purpose was in progress of developement.—But what could that purpose be? Why had that whole church, unasked, unlooked for, entered the Universalist meeting at such a time and under such extraordinary circumstances?

The Presbyterian minister saluted the Universalist with great cordiality, and asked leave to explain the cause of this remarkable visit. And with deep emotion he went on to say, in substance—That he and his friends had long observed with much interest, the progress of the revival among them;

and had become fully convinced that it was a work of the Lord—That the prejudice which they had formerly cherished against Universalists and Universalism had been overcome; and that under the influence of these impressions and convictions, he had that day, laid the subject before his assembled church; and they had resolved to give this highest proof of their cordial fellowship, by proposing to join in the exercises of prayer and praise. And such a shout as went up from that congregation on this announcement, emphatically proclaimed the accordance of all hearts—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will towards men.”

And there was peace that day, between the members of conflicting creeds. They sung and prayed together; and mutually exhorted one another to “love and good works.” Old enmities were overcome by new friendships—prejudice melted away before the sunlight of charity, and mutual sympathy and mutual zeal inspired their devotions at the altar of a common Father and God.

Alas how short-lived, are many good and

wise resolutions. These kind-hearted and charitable Presbyterians thought not of the storm of indignation, which they were calling down upon their own heads, by this one—this *first*, and almost *last act* of fellowship for Universalists. The story went abroad—its verity was scrupulously ascertained; and the Presbyterian authorities took early measures to cool the ardor of those charities which could recognize Universalists as fellow-christians. The church and the minister were drily and early admonished to stand aloof from the matter, and by no means to continue the intercourse which they had voluntarily commenced. And both the minister and the church, found it convenient to comply. They separated themselves from the meetings—began to wonder how they could so far forget themselves and their duty, as to do, or even think of doing, what they had done. And the poor minister who had been foremost in this charitable work, what could he do? Why, he became suddenly convinced, that he had been entirely wrong; and as the best apology of which the case admitted, and to fix the blame in the right quarter—*he con-*

*fessed that in committing this outrage upon the spirit of Presbyterianism, he was now convinced that it must have been by the instigation of the Devil!* However this may have been, there is little reason to fear that the Devil will ever tempt that denomination to perform another similar act of christian liberality!

The Universalists lost nothing by this wretched manœuvering on the part of their opposers. For it was too apparent to escape public observation, that when the Presbyterian church presented itself in the Universalist meeting, it adopted the measure in good faith. And on the other hand, that when it disavowed the act—that disavowal was co-erced, and dictated by a heartless and despicable policy. The work however went on—none the less vigorously and effectually, for their defection and opposition. Their friendship and co-operation was but the work of a single day. All that could yield any advantage to either party from the extraordinary step then taken, was in favor of the Universalists—all that followed was against the interests of the Presbyterian church.

During the progress of the revival, about *one hundred* members were added to the church in Hamilton—some sixty or seventy of whom, received *Baptism by immersion*. What particular circumstances operated to the general prevalence of this rite, is not known; but whatever it was, it threw its influence far abroad, and many individuals in different and distant churches, and one or more clergymen adopted it as a matter of conscience.

The duration of this revival, is probably without a parallel in the country. It continued with little abatement for some four years. Its first appearance was wholly independent of any concerted effort, and therefore entirely unexpected. Nothing could be more foreign to the general characteristics of the denomination than excitement. Nor did it ever assume those offensive and revolting peculiarities, for which more modern revivals are so remarkable. The devotional exercises in which its subjects engaged, were always conducted with the utmost decorum; and the language of exhortation and prayer, by whomsoever spoken, was free from the

outrageous bombast and blasphemous impertinence and arrogance, with which professional revivalists abuse men and insult the majesty of Heaven.

Fear—whose influence is so efficacious, and which mingles so fully in modern religious excitements generally, had no part in this revival. On the contrary, the great moving power was the perceptible and inexhaustible *goodness* of the Deity. This was seen with new eyes, in all its bearings upon the nature, and condition, and destiny of man. And its legitimate effects were visible in more ardent expressions of gratitude, in purer devotions and higher aspirations. It is not improbable, that in many instances the passions were over-excited, and that individuals felt and uttered fervors, which the general condition of man does not permit him to sustain; and which like fires no longer controlled, soonest exhaust the materials on which they feed and by which they are alone supported,

And to some extent, this was plainly the case in the present instance. The excitement ceased to spread—the fervid became cool—the zealous indifferent—religious meet-

ings less interesting, less frequent—and all the wheels of the general movement stood still. A re-action followed. Thus it ever wae—and thus it ever will be with every thing that depends upon the passions and sympathies of mankind. The pendulum is not more true to its centre of gravity, than human nature to its level, and when ever diverted from that level, and by whatever means, sooner or later, it will return.

It should be remarked however, that those who had been the subjects of this movement, had never been frantic. The comparative coldness and indifference which succeeded, was not therefore the torpor of death; but was proportionate to the consistency and propriety which they had all along preserved. And consequently while individuals lost their zeal, societies lost very few of their members. The great doctrines of the gospel of illimitable grace, had been kept constantly in sight—and under all the flights of heated passions and excited feelings, the *mind* had been employed, and continued to hold its grasp upon everlasting truth.

After the lapse of some twenty five years,

it is still a question of no easy solution—whether the true and vital interests of the gospel were essentially promoted by this great awakening! That they were generally supposed at the time, to be greatly advanced by this display of unusual zeal, cannot be questioned. But it is more than doubtful, whether Universalism had at the end of seven years from the first symptoms of revival, advanced one step beyond what it would have done, had that event never happened. One thing is certain—the very societies where its influence was greatest—where its most desirable results were most triumphantly displayed—have made little or no progress since. Their congregations are no larger—the number of their communicants is no greater—and they are by no means more zealous or prosperous, than many others which never felt an impulse of the excitement by which they were once moved.

It must not be forgotten, that this revival came without any preconcerted effort. It did indeed find many subjects prepared to go forward in the general movement; and who doubtless acted more or less, upon the feelings common to similar excitements however



they may have originated. And so far as they outran the ordinary career of the emotions—re-action followed. For every degree of extraordinary excitement then cherished, a corresponding degree of apathy was ultimately experienced. It is fair to conclude then, that as in a succession of years, no visible benefits have resulted from this revival—it must be very doubtful policy to attempt to move the community to great excitement in matters of religion.

#### FEAR OF MORAL EFFECTS.

The session of the Genesee Branch Association, was held this year (1817) in the village of Buffalo, and was very well attended; although no more than *four* or *five* societies were represented—that number being the sum total of our organized force within a hundred miles. But several of our best preachers were present and preached; and the friends were both gratified and encouraged.

On the breaking up of Association, invitations were extended by several gentlemen to the clergyman who would still remain in the country, to visit and preach in their

respective neighborhoods. In several of these places, Universalism had never been preached; and those who requested the appointments were not very perfectly acquainted with the doctrine. The prevailing theology still lingered in their minds—or rather, its influences were predominant; and though liberal themselves, they were not always certain that it would be either prudent or safe for the great public to believe or profess their cherished sentiments. They did not by any means, consider their own virtue and piety at all endangered—but *they* were persons of established habits, and might constitute exceptions to the supposed general rule under possible circumstances. Many, it was maintained, would not give the subject that attention which they had done, and children and youth might throw off all restraint under the hope of final salvation.

The following conversation will exhibit the feelings and apprehensions entertained by one of these persons—and it may be assumed without much qualification, that they were the same in a majority of the liberal minded men throughout that section of the State.—

And it is marvellous, that with such obstructions in the minds of even the friends of the doctrine of the reconciliation, its progress should have been so rapid and its triumphs so complete.

GENTLEMAN—"I have believed your doctrine for twenty years; but have seldom said any thing about it. And I have not heard a sermon from one of your preachers these dozen years until your Association—no one came along who preached Universalism."

PREACHER—"There are few in the country who have believed the doctrine so long. But I can hardly conceive how any one can believe in so glorious a system for twenty years, and say nothing about it—why, it is almost enough to make the dumb talk."

G.—"It is really a great and glorious truth; and when I hear it preached, it gives me great consolation. But I have a family around me, and do not wish to bias their minds—besides, I am apprehensive of the consequences."

P.—"One would suppose that so good a truth, was none too good for children. But perhaps I do not understand you?"

G.—“The plain truth is—I am afraid of the effects of Universalism on the minds of children. They need restraint; mankind generally need it; and I do not know but the terrors of endless misery may be of use in governing them. If none but persons whose principles are established, whose habits are formed, believed it, I should have no fears. It will not be likely to injure either of *us*, or others of our age, who have good principles.”

P.—“Then you think that Universalism is, on the whole, a dangerous doctrine.”

G.—“Yes—that’s my opinion.”

P.—“But you believe it to be *true*—that it is the doctrine of the *Bible*—that God *revealed* to mankind—and that Christ and the Apostles *preached it* for their salvation.”

G.—“Certainly, I have no doubt of all that; and I rejoice in it.”

P.—“This is very strange, Sir, that you should believe Universalism to be true, and yet think that such a truth would do mischief. Do you suppose that God knew whether Universalism would do good or evil, before he revealed it to mankind?”

G.—“O yes—He must know what was best.”

P.—“Just so, I think. And as the world was bad enough before the gospel was revealed, I cannot believe that the truth tends to make it worse. We have great reason on the contrary, to suppose, that it was intended to make the world better.”

G.—“That is plainly the object—but we do not always see it accomplished.”

P.—“Very true. But that is not the fault of the gospel. Those who are not made better by it, are certainly no worse for it; so that it cannot be said that it has corrupted them.”

G.—“That’s a new idea—I have not thought of that—but it is true.”

P.—“Well—whether new or old, the history of mankind *shows* that it is true. You admit that it does not make *us* any worse—have you really any evidence that it makes *others* worse?”

G.—“I cannot say that I have. But I have my *fears* for the young, the thoughtless and wicked.”

P.—“But you have not seen the influence

of Universalism tried upon such persons; and I regard all such fears as groundless until they are sustained by tangible facts. Besides, you have admitted that God revealed, and that Christ and the Apostles preached Universalism. Can you seriously believe, that they did all this, and at the same time did not know, or were entirely mistaken about the results?"

G.—“O, that is impossible. God is good, and Christ was good; and what one revealed and the other preached must be good—and good for those who believe it.”

P.—“Well—what is good for us in this case, must be good for your children. Depend upon it—it will do your children and all others just as much good to “love God and keep his commandments,” as it will us. This, Universalism teaches, and therefore cannot hurt them.”

G.—“How strange it is, that I should never have thought of all this before! I must have derived my fears from the prejudices of others. And it will be a great relief to feel that the truth will do no injury to morals.”

P.—“And quite as great relief probably,

to learn that morality never requires the aid of falsehood.”

#### THE DISTILLERY.

This is an offensive word, and brings with it by association, a view of all the miseries and degradation of which intoxication, has been directly or indirectly the procuring cause. But time was, when very few if any, even of the wise, and good, and philanthropic, took this view of the subject. Long since the period here referred to—no man suffered in reputation because he was a distiller; nor did one probably of all the number, entertain any adequate ideas of the injury which he was inflicting upon public morals and public happiness. It was regarded as a legitimate and profitable business; and it accordingly found many adventurers. Few however attempted its justification, when once aroused to a sense of the evils it brought down upon community; and when naked interest became the only plea for its continuance. But interest has been put to shame, by the evidence that in a country like our own, every man may, if he will—employ his

capital, his industry, and his talents, in some other manner more honorable and equally profitable to himself; and more useful—or at least, less hurtful, to his species. At all events, human nature has been elevated and human happiness greatly advanced, by the establishment and progress of *the cause of temperance*. It has already wrought a reformation, second only in moral results, to the beneficent influences of christianity.— And the evidence of its many, and various, and beneficial effects, have become so manifest, and taken such strong hold upon the public mind, that it requires some degree of hardihood either to make, or vend intoxicating liquors.

An appointment had been made for a Universalist meeting in the neighborhood of the State line of Pennsylvania—and was probably the first meeting of the kind ever attempted in the immediate vicinity. No arrangements were made respecting the particular building to be occupied for the service. But in the interval, the best and most commodious room in the place, was secured, viz: the Hall, or Ball Room, of a public



house; and notice was accordingly sent far and wide among the inhabitants.

The appointed day came, and with it came the preacher; but the *room* could not be so occupied. That terrible and often fatal visitant—the Typhus Fever, was already there; and one or more of its victims was languishing under its withering power, in that very Hall. What then could be done? There was not another public room in the place, that would accommodate the congregation. For the notice had been general, and the novelty of such a meeting, if nothing else, rendered it morally certain that there would be a full attendance. The day was waning—the notice could not be recalled—the gentleman who had invited the appointment was exceedingly anxious that all should hear—but where could the congregation meet?—Sometimes a neighbor was called in for counsel, but none could give any advice.—Nothing could be more perplexing. It was within an hour or two of the time, when the gentleman who had assumed all the responsibility in the whole transaction, very quietly and gravely sat down, and opened his mind—thus:

GENTLEMAN—"A thought has just struck me, that there is one place at hand; which will answer our purpose. But then—we must have your consent to go there."

PREACHER—"My consent? I am not aware that it is for me to say where my friends shall hold their meetings."

G.—"That may be true in ordinary cases; but this is a little *extraordinary*. You are a stranger, and in courtesy—we wish your opinion about the matter. For the truth is—the only room that will hold us, is the store room in my *distillery!*"

P.—"If that is the only place which will answer the purpose—and as the congregation know the reason why it is occupied, I see no very serious objections to going there. I presume it is not running *now?*"

G.—"Yes, it is, and that is not the worst of it—matters are in such a state that we can not stop it. That is the reason why we particularly wanted your opinion."

P.—"That alters the case materially.—How shall we get along with the noise? and shall we not be liable to continued interruptions? I suppose nothing need be said of

*preaching and making whiskey* at the same time and in the same place!"

G.—"O, we can manage *that* well enough. The store room is overhead, and the door into it opens right from the street. The work will all be below; and I will take care that we have no noise or disturbance. We never have any company and drinking there."

P.—"But will our opposers go there? Perhaps they may think it very well for Universalists—quite in character; but will they think it safe for themselves?"

G.—"Go? Yes—we have half a dozen sects here; and every one will go as freely as if it was a church."

P.—"Very well then—I will preach any where, if people will go to hear. So the question is settled, as far as I am concerned."

Seats were hastily arranged, the room lit up, the congregation assembled; and a most orderly and quiet religious meeting was held in—a distillery.

#### INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE.

Few persons are aware of the influence which they either do, or may exert, over the

community around them. The power and extent of that influence, will be determined by the position and means of the individual; and especially by his capacity or tact, in using them. An influence for good, or for evil, every one does, and must exert. To act upon others—and to be acted upon by them, are among the necessities of human existence; and no man ever lived, that did not bear the stamp of his associations, and who did not also impress more or less of his own character and principles upon his fellow men.

For the good and upright man, this truth possesses a peculiar value. He perceives in the superior might of virtue a “land of promise” on which he can fix his eyes, and see it peopled in due time with the sons of God.—This better influence, was nobly illustrated by an individual in a small village in Western New York. He was emphatically a Universalist; and his talents, his exertions, as well as professions, were openly and honestly directed to the advancement of the principles of his faith. And these efforts, and their results show, how much may be effected by one man, when his enterprise is sanctioned by integrity.

On the single invitation of this individual, a Universalist preacher made a journey of *two hundred* miles, for the purpose of bearing the message of eternal truth to the believers and “strangers scattered abroad;” and to aid by the humble means at his command, in the establishment of the gospel where as yet, no societies of the order existed. On that one individual therefore, devolved the entire responsibility of the enterprise. And it was sustained in a manner worthy of its conception, and its design. He acted up to his responsibility—he secured a prior right to the occupancy of a convenient place of worship—and he succeeded in inducing all parties, and nearly all persons in the vicinity, to attend the meetings. Opposers came because they honored the sincerity, and respected the integrity of the man—and those who cared little for religion, and less for its peculiar form as Universalism, also came, chiefly for *his* gratification.

This influence extended over a large part of the *three counties*, as the three western ones in the State were then technically called; and the preacher often experienced

the kindest reception and most hospitable treatment in consequence. Houses were opened, and congregations assembled, and many persons condescended to be hearers, because it was known that the preacher was countenanced, and patronized, and recommended, by a certain individual. There never could be any reasonable doubt, that this wide-spread influence was the true secret of innumerable civilities bestowed on the herald of Universalism; and that the attentions and hospitalities bestowed on him—were in many instances, but substantial and manly compliments to another man. It is forever impossible to estimate the difference in the condition of the preacher under these circumstances, from what it must have been, had he been left—as he sometimes was, to make his way unaided and alone. Nor could that influence be less valuable, in diffusing over the public mind, the knowledge and the power of the doctrine of Universal Salvation.

It is from such instances of personal influence, that we discover the grounds on which a few individuals would have preserved

“The cities of the Plain,” from destruction. It is not their mere personal worth—but its power; which diffuses over kindred man its own benificent spirit, and inspires him with the same godlike principles! Let every Universalist so live, and persevere in endeavors to advance the cause of divine truth; and many hearts that now feel the anguish and the terrors of a gloomy and revolting theology, will be made to rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

#### REBUKE.

Few things have so obvious and certain tendency to rectify the mistakes of bigotry, as direct and stern rebuke. Bigots and fanatics are not in a situation to hear, or understand arguments; and scripture evidence will have no weight with them, because they suppose it balanced or neutralized by passages used to sustain their own favorite theory.—To adopt their own method of contradicting—to make assertion only, without proof, neither convinces nor conciliates; but on the contrary, while it irritates and provokes—confirms them in the belief that you neither

have arguments, nor proofs, in support of your opinions. Their self-confidence grows with every instance of condescension which you make to their prejudices, beyond the mere admission of their perfect sincerity; and slight concessions to their judgment where they may happen to be correct, will most certainly be construed into an abandonment of your principles. So again, if you chance to agree in some unimportant particular, with any disreputable and obnoxious class—you will be instantly identified with it; and the trumpet blown for the grave purpose of announcing what no one believes. You cannot treat their illiberality or ignorance with silent contempt; for it will be mistaken for proof that you have nothing to say. Nor can you “return railing for railing”—or so much as express, much less feel, the indignation and venom which they seldom fail to betray, and take no pains to conceal.—What remains then, but to “rebuke them sharply.”

A Universalist clergyman was invited by a friend to accompany him in a call at the house of a widow lady—who had recently read several works on the restitution, and had



expressed a desire to converse respecting the meaning of a few passages of scriptures.—The call was accordingly made—one or two gentlemen boarders and a small boy, constituted the only visible company; and the conversation was at once directed to the subject of religion. The passages which had perplexed the mind of the good lady, were introduced and carefully considered; and it was apparent, that though she could not, and did not, profess to be a Universalist, still, she took a deep interest in the religious views of that class of christians. She made many inquiries respecting the progress of the doctrine of the reconciliation, and the consequent encouragement of its friends; and expressed much satisfaction, that a more beneficent system of religion was throwing its influences over society.

At this moment, a lady who had been reclining on a closely curtained bed in a corner of the room, and who till that instant had not been observed—rose and looking fiercely at the preacher, said—“*Sir, if I believed as you do, I would kill myself and child before morning.*” This was a common *bravadoism*;

and supposed by fanatics of "more zeal than knowledge," to be quite sufficient to confound any Universalist. Nothing could be more unexpected, than the sudden appearance of this lady; and nothing more expressive of determination, than her language. There she stood, erect and firm as a statue—her sharp and dark eyes fixed in a look of utter defiance, full upon the face of the preacher. He was really taken by surprise; but returned the determined look of the assailant, and calmly asked in true Yankee style—"Pray, Ma'am, what would you do that for?"

She had evidently matured the subject in her own mind, and arranged her language accordingly, before making her appearance; and her answer was prompt and decided, as well as significant of conscious triumph.—"What would I do it for?—To get to Heaven as soon as possible!" It would be difficult to describe the look of malicious satisfaction, with which she now for the first time turned her eyes upon the other guests; and then again fixed them upon the preacher. He again returned her look of defiance; and in a firm tone, said very distinctly and emphat-

ically—"Well, Ma'am, one thing is certain, *you* will never get to Heaven until you manifest a better temper."

This was so obviously true, that the company burst into a laugh. And the abashed lady, who was the widowed daughter of the hostess, dropped as suddenly back to her hiding place, as she had issued from it. She uttered not another word, nor was she again visible while the guests remained.

It was naturally a matter of some little speculation between the preacher and his friend—what the effect of this rebuff would be upon the mind of the sensitive and excited female. This was determined a few days afterwards, by a Lecture held in the village by the same preacher. Among the first who entered, and who seemed to take pleasure in the display of an independent and liberal spirit, was this identical woman. She listened with marked attention—came forward and congratulated the speaker—and was evidently cured of her bigotry by an accidental rebuke.

## THE TEXT.

Among the many ways in which the enemies of Universalism, vented their spleen in abortive attempts to display their wit—few were more common or popular than that of giving a text to the preacher at the moment he was about to commence the service. The time, the manner and the circumstances, whatever might be the pretence—always proved to the satisfaction of every mind, that the motive was not to elicit truth, or to gain information; but to test the ability of the speaker, or disgrace him by a practical joke. But prejudice is far more blind than justice, and consequently seldom fails of going wide of its mark. For it seems rarely, if ever to occur to our opponents, that the texts which they regard as the pillars of their own system and therefore sufficient to silence at once and forever any Universalist—are the very passages of scripture, with which of all others, the members of that denomination are most familiar. Their situation compels them to understand all the passages of that class.—And they have given

abundant proof, that they have examined them and satisfied themselves of their import; and that they are able to answer any inquiries respecting them, and to meet every objection founded upon them. And yet, these are the identical texts, which opposers present over and over again for instant construction—gravely supposing it would seem, that Universalists are as ignorant as themselves concerning their meaning.

Innumerable instances of this impertinence occurred during the earlier times of Universalism; and much surprise has often been felt and exhibited, that so far from giving any special embarrassment to the preacher, he should be able in this apparently extempore manner, to give a most clear, consistent and comprehensive exposition of the passage. And it is beyond all question, that the facility with which these constructions have been given, and the lucid manner in which the great doctrine of the restitution has been sustained and vindicated from some of these very texts—has had great influence in softening the prejudices, and removing objections from the minds of opposers.—

The preachers never shrunk from the demands thus made upon them, though well aware of the indignity implied and intended. They were in fact, compelled to pass this ordeal? Public opinion required it of them; and to decline it, would have been to incur the imputation of a dread of results, or the tacit acknowledgement of an incapacity to defend their opinions. Besides—these impudent and querulous opponents, usually constituted but a very small part of the congregations which would listen to the exposition of a given passage; and the preacher by availing himself of his right to explain the circumstances under which the text was given—invariably enlisted the sympathies of his hearers in his favor. An amusing instance of this whole procedure, occurred in 1817, at a Lecture in the village of Manlius.

The hour of service had come, and the clergyman with a few persons were waiting for the arrival of others—when a stout and clumsy boy some fifteen years of age, entered, walked deliberately up to the preacher, and presented him with a slip of dirty paper. Not a word was spoken; but the

messenger waited as if expecting a reply.—The contents of the paper were first looked over, and then read aloud to all that had assembled—thus:

“Sir, you will oblige a number of curious minds in this village, by preaching this evening from Ezek. 13: 19. Please inform the bearer whether you will and oblige a—Friend.”

PREACHER—“Who wrote this note?”

BOY—“Mr. P——, Sir.”

PR.—“And who is Mr. P——, does any one know him?”

GENT.—“Mr. P—— is the Methodist class leader, and is a respectable citizen.”

SEVERAL VOICES.—“What is the text?”

PR.—“I do not recollect; but will look.”

Turning to the passage he read aloud—“And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies.”

SEVERAL VOICES—“That’s an insult—I would not gratify him—I would take no notice of it.”

PR.—“Never mind—I am not responsible for the motive; that is his concern.”

Then addressing the boy—“Tell Mr. P—— that I cannot allow him to judge by hearsay; but that if he will attend, I will preach from his text. Will that answer do?”

BOY—“Yes Sir. He will come.”

STRANGER—“He will come and bring the class with him.”

The preacher now applied himself to the construction of a discourse on the text. He could not but be reminded of the text given to Stephen Burrows—for it was plain enough, that it had nothing to do with the controversy between Universalists and Limitarians. In a few minutes the veritable class leader with a number of his church made their appearance. The text was given out; and shown to constitute a rebuke of certain false prophets, who denied that the judgments denounced by the true prophet of God would fall upon his people. This was applied to the prevailing orthodoxy which maintains that though sinners and deserving of punishment, *believers* will escape its infliction. And it was argued that the inculcation of such



views, was "*lying*" to God's people—For the scriptures distinctly taught that the Deity would "by no means clear the guilty," and that "he will render to every man according to his works." This was turning the tables in a way altogether unlooked for—the utmost severity of the text was enforced without qualification, and charged home upon the Methodists as particularly obnoxious to its bearings. The congregation knew that the Class Leader deserved all the severity, that could be urged with any show of propriety; and the poor man submitted without a murmur and with becoming humility. But he never afterwards, gave a text to a Universalist preacher.

#### AN INVESTMENT.

This year (1817) was one of unparalleled scarcity in all the western counties of New-York, as well as other parts of the Union. The first consequence was—an exorbitant price on every thing for the support of man or beast. It was during this season, that a series of week evening Lectures following each other at regular intervals, were kept

up in a certain village for several months in succession. There were few substantial reasons for this, beyond the professed desire of several worthy friends; and it accorded with other arrangements of the preacher. But on the contrary, there was not the shadow of probability, that the expenses which he would incur, and which he could ill afford, would be re-embursed by his friends. In full view of these embarrassing considerations, the appointments were determined on, and persisted in under every discouragement. At the conclusion, the preacher realised what he had anticipated—and left without receiving an amount that would have paid his fare for a single night, at the public house where his meetings were held.

Let it not be supposed, that this statement is intended as any reflection upon the few friends who attended the Lectures. They had promised nothing—they were not in a situation to do much, whatever might be their disposition. For in the present scarcity, villagers—and especially those in moderate circumstances, had other immediate and highly important uses for their money.

Years rolled away—and the inconvenience resulting from a long train of entirely unproductive appointments, had almost ceased to be remembered. A society of devout worshippers of the God of the Patriarchs, had arisen in the place; and though few of its members were in any manner connected or concerned, with the early propagation of Universalism, and knew little of the sacrifices of the preacher—still there were those who knew and who remembered them. The preacher was also remembered. And after the lapse of *seventeen years*, he was invited to visit and spend two or three Sundays with the Society. He did so—and received exclusive of the promised compensation—a sum more than equal to the principal and interest of all that he had expended in early endeavors to establish Universalism among them. This was emphatically gathering “after many days,” the bread that had been cast upon the waters, whether it be regarded in a moral, or a pecuniary sense. For in both, the *investment* proved abundantly productive.

Unimportant as the above facts may be considered in themselves—they are not with-

out their moral, and their use. The preacher of Universalism, will learn from them, that he should never despair—that the sacrifices which he is sometimes called upon to make to his duty and his profession, are loans to a cause, which though he may perish will repay in full to the common heirs of life and truth.

#### ACCESSION AND DISAPPOINTMENT.

The experience of more than a year and a half, had demonstrated that there was ample room and encouragement for the labors of one or two additional preachers of Universalism, in the then three western counties of New York. Congregations could be gathered in all the principal settlements; but with the efforts of only one individual little permanent progress could be made, and the multiplied demands for a preacher's services could not be supplied. Nearly two months between meetings—when the whole number of places was included and some 300 or 400 miles travel in the time, with an average of nearly one sermon each day—while it was more than any mere human being could per-

form, would make little impression. It was therefore very desirable that one or two efficient co-workers should enter this field of labor; and several unsuccessful efforts were made to attain that object. But it was not until late in 1817, that Mr. L. C. Todd a young man known to possess what were then deemed superior advantages, as well as talents, came as a visitor and commenced the ministry of reconciliation.

He preached to great acceptance, and was becoming both useful and popular—when he unaccountably dashed down the high hopes of his friends and suspended his ministry. He had become perplexed and bewildered with speculations concerning the apparent evils in the physical and moral worlds, which he felt unable to reconcile with infinite goodness. He could not satisfy himself, that it was consistent with the character of an infinitely good Being, with infinite means at his disposal, to permit the existence of so great and manifold evils. Without absolutely falling into the Manichean system of two eternal principles, good and evil—he *doubted* the infinite goodness of God; without believ-

ing that evil was the work of a malignant being—he *hesitated* to admit that it was among the possible combinations of the plan of divine goodness. And he did, precisely what every honest man would do under the circumstances—he suspended his ministry.

This event was exceedingly unpropitious to the cause of Universalism. Opposers who were watching every movement, with keen eyes and deep anxiety, seized upon it with ferocious haste and satisfaction. It was a fund on which they could draw at pleasure—and they used it with their utmost skill, and no inconsiderable success. It lowered Universalism and especially its preachers in public estimation; and the effect upon believers and friends, was scarcely less pernicious.

After some months, having overcome his difficulties and perplexities, he resumed his ministry. He had remained in the midst of the desolation which he had wrought—he had seen with his own eyes the prostration of fair hopes, and heard with his own ears the complaints and murmurs of those who wished well to him and to the cause of truth. But he was now satisfied that even infinite

goodness might permit the existence of great but temporary evils, for wise and beneficent ends; and he was desirous of proclaiming his convictions. His friends again rallied and gathered around him; he became an able minister; but the confidence of the public seems never to have been regained. His talents were appreciated and respected; but he did not receive that support, and command that influence to which he was probably entitled. And after struggling with his new difficulties for a few years, in a fit of morbid excitement he renounced both his *principles* and profession. He complained of the neglect and heartlessness of those in whom he confided—but he had forgotten that he had himself, contributed to the distrust which wrought these results. He blamed a whole people, for faults, which if they existed at all, were only committed by a few individuals. And he not only renounced all connexion and direct sympathy with Universalists—but he denounced them in a hasty publication, as unworthy of common charity. This was too much for his own heart—and far beyond his own sober

convictions; and he cordially and voluntarily recalled his language, expressed his regret for the severities he had used, and without renewing his ministry returned to the profession of Universalism. It is now understood, that after many years, he has again entered upon the ministry of reconciliation.

#### RESULTS.

The doctrine of Universal Salvation, had now been preached in almost every accessible place in Western New York, as well as in the older parts of the State. Among the moving masses already settling, or the swarms that were pouring in to this comparatively new region, it was vain to look for any very general, or uniform moral movement. Social habits and social affinities, were to be formed anew, and under new circumstances and relations. To live, to labor, to secure what was deemed a comfortable subsistence—to avert, or to endure, hardships and privations, were the subjects which necessarily, and in many respects justly, engrossed much attention. Yet there was a degree of liberality of sentiment often shown,



that would probably have surprised those by whom it was exhibited, had their former associations exerted their accustomed influence. But they were far removed from the scenes of early influences and prejudices, and the partial dissolution of the ties and restraints under which they had formerly lived and acted, left them to act in accordance, with their new position—to think, to hear, and to judge for themselves. It was in this way that many felt impelled to act—at all events, in this manner they did act.

Members of sects the most unlike, and most opposed to Universalism, attended the meetings of that denomination in the most frank and open manner; and in several instances opened their houses for lectures.—They invited with a cordiality *then* unknown in older communities, the preacher of Universalism to visit them—received and treated him with respect and kindness; and joined with him in devotional exercises at their firesides, as well as in the services of public worship. And this, certainly not because they were predisposed to Universalism—but because they were willing to know what it

was, and whether it was as dangerous as some represented.

Another consideration undoubtedly exerted great influence in these proceedings, and which should be carefully distinguished from motives of genuine liberality. The great majority of the population were from New England, and the older parts of New York; and alike accustomed to attend and enjoy the regular Sabbath worship. Their situation now denied to them, these wonted privileges. Few places had any regular meetings, preachers were scarce, and even that few, were of conflicting sects; and in many instances, long periods intervened between appointments. But the religious feeling was more intensely active, from the very difficulties of its gratification. Many no doubt—who had thought little of the importance or pleasure of public worship, when it might be attended without inconvenience, now felt the absence of the privilege as among the greatest of their many privations. To feel that their children might *possibly* grow up unaccustomed to the quiet devotion, the humanizing and elevating influences of the public

Sunday worship, was painful beyond all other trials.

When therefore a religious meeting was appointed, it was less a matter of consideration who would preach, or to what denomination he belonged, than that it furnished an opportunity of attending church. It recalled the scenes of a distant home, and its thousand tender associations—the decorum that pervaded the old church, so often disregarded or transgressed—and the moral influences or rebukes of the preacher. Curiosity too, when Universalism was to be preached, lent its aid to all other reasons; and often added to the number and interest of the congregation. When these several things are taken into consideration, it will be apparent that there was much more of *seeming* than of *actual* liberality.

The results then, of about two years of effort, in endeavors to plant Universalism in the western extremity of New York—were the organization of *two societies* and the gathering of some *fifteen congregations* where no distinct organization was attempted. In several of the latter, societies would have been form-

ed without much delay, could the meetings have been continued. But that was no longer practicable; and for years, the places where the public ministration of Universalism was known—knew it no more. To the consequent discouragement of friends, was added, as might be expected, the double diligence of opposers; and comparatively little was left of which to boast concerning the influence of liberal christianity upon the public mind.

But the germs of truth and hope had been planted deep, in many minds; and these, whatever might come, could never perish.—A work had been fully accomplished in their minds and hearts, which needed no repetition, except for edification. And though much was lost for want of culture—though many received no deep impressions and perhaps identified themselves with another gospel—still these true believers continued steadfast, and sympathized alone with Universalists. And they waited with patriarchal patience, and with the endurance which strong hope inspires, for the renovation of the ministry of eternal truth. While then it is natural to regret, that all the means of

progress were not improved, and every advantage followed up and pushed on to its utmost limit; still these things had been accomplished—the field had been opened; the work had been commenced; the great truth of man's final salvation from sin and suffering, from sorrow, and from death, had been proclaimed; and many had believed to the saving of the soul. And if the inveterate prejudices of some, had been more deeply and strongly fixed, those of many others, had been rooted up and forever removed. The light of truth had shone in upon minds and hearts that had long dwelt in the darkness of doubt and despair; and mourning spirits had felt the comforts of the hope that is "full of immortality."

In other and older parts of the State, and especially in central New York, much had already been accomplished; as those who could look back a few years, had every reason to know and feel. The denominational horizon was daily widening and clearing, and brightening. New societies were springing into view, and those already formed were growing stronger and more permanent, as

well as augmenting in number. And if the time had not fully come—it was at hand, when the healthful moral influences of eternal truth, were to be triumphantly exhibited, as well as felt and enjoyed, by those who believed. Unwilling as the religious world around might be, to give place, or rank, to the family of Universalists, it was becoming evident that an impartial and enlightened public would soon settle both by an irreversible determination. What it *was*, may be inferred by the reader—what it *is*, he will learn from the fact that there are now nearly *three hundred* societies of the order in this great State—what it *will be*, he will be at no loss to determine, when he recollects that all this has been attained in *forty years*.

# I N D E X .

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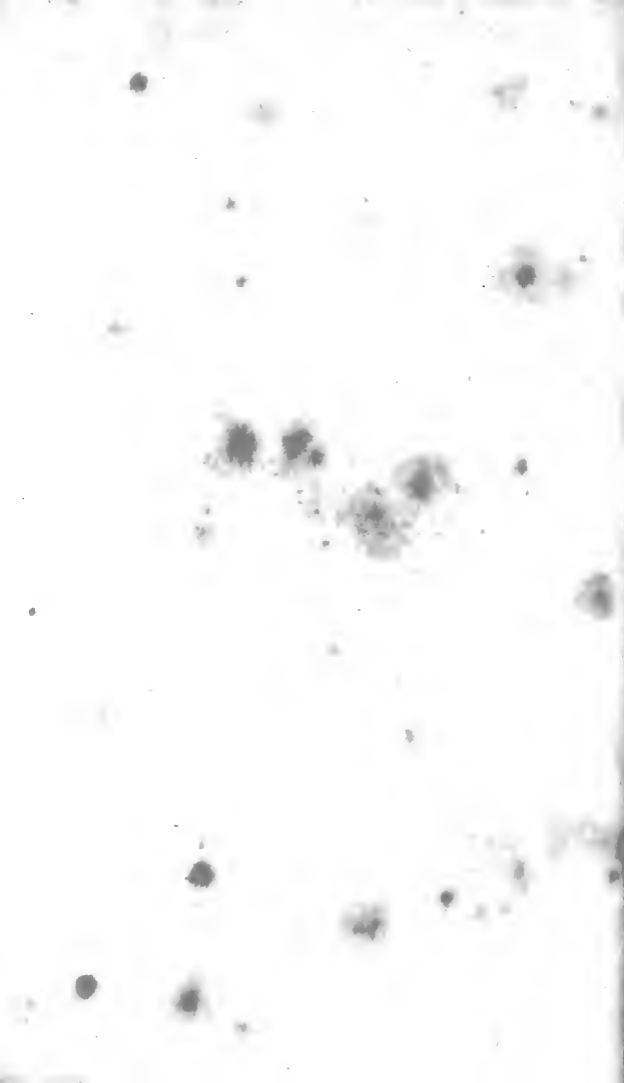
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